

## What is Google universal Search?

It seems every time Google makes a change to its search engine the world takes notice, and why not? Google is the biggest search engine on the planet, so if Google does make a change to even the smallest algorithm it uses, everyone should sit up and take notice. Google revealed to the world its new Google universal search on May 16, 2007. What Google claimed it would do was integrate, no the correct term they used was 'weave'; the new Google universal search into the existing Google search engine. First things first Google universal search is not a major change in any algorithm, or in no way means that the criteria in which search results are displayed has changed. So if you are search engine optimizer you can heave a sigh of relief (at least from the algorithm point of view).

So then what is Google universal search? Well the name is pretty self explanatory, what Google plans to do, is bring you pretty much everything associated with a keyword when you look for a particular keyword. For example if you were to type in 'Steve Jobs' in Google, you will notice there is a search result from You tube displayed among the web results. This is just the beginning of what Google is hoping to achieve, what Google is planning to do eventually is this: for example when you type in 'Ferrari' in Google, there will be a photograph, a new article, and if possible a video of a Ferrari that shows up on the main page of the Google search. In either case, the intended idea is to bring not just web results that are link based, but truly multimedia rich results like images, videos and even recent books that are based on the keyword or person you are searching for.

Today June is coming to an end, and still only a handful of keywords are actually showing what the Google universal search wanted to achieve, as mentioned earlier in the article instead of making a 360 degree switch in the search engine, Google has chosen to slowly update and integrate the Google universal search results with the existing algorithms and search criteria it is running, from what I can see, it might be quite a while before the impact of Google's innovation the Google universal search (or GUS as it is being called) will be felt.

Currently Google indexes over 220 different formats like HTML, PDF and Microsoft office extensions, if you notice sometimes the keyword you search for actually brings up a PDF document as a search result. In fact just type in 'press release pdf' in Google and the first page results are all pdf files. This is just a taste of what Google universal search hopes to do by including multimedia extensions in its search results. As is the case with almost all new innovations with search engine technologies, Yahoo too has launched oneSearch which on the surface looks similar to Google Universal search. However I feel Google is already a step ahead of Yahoo as Google's results are actually relevant and they are based on their importance (as they should be), where as Yahoo oneSearch actually offers the first video or image that is associated with the keyword, irrespective of its importance to the keyword.

### Comparison of Google Universal Search with other similar search engines

As mentioned earlier Google is not the only search engine that is working on integrating various multimedia aspects into its search results, almost all major search engines have or are working on versions that are similar to Google universal search, there is Yahoo Alpha search, Ask X and Live. All the search engines mentioned earlier are traditional rivals of Google, and have been constantly working on newer ways to get one up on Google, however the simplicity with which Google displays results has been the biggest factor in favour of Google universal search.

Lets start with Yahoo Alpha search, Yahoo Alpha (beta version) search actually displays all search results in separate sections, the main search results are displayed in the middle of the page, and the image, video and news / Wikipedia searches are displayed on the right of the screen, so basically any search will show the web results separately, and the image and video searches on the same page but in a separate section.

Ask X and Live search display results similar to Yahoo Alpha, the only additional feature that Ask X has is that it actually displays shopping links in the search engine as well, I find the Live search map function pointless, if I was looking for a map of a particular area, I would simply type in the name of the place with map at the end. However almost all search engines apart from Google have pretty much the same pattern of displaying their search results, Images, Videos and other links separately and web results in the middle.

So essentially at the moment Google has a unique way of displaying search results when compared to other search engines, the question is; Does being different necessarily mean Google has it right? The answer is a little more complex than that, I personally would prefer having a search engine that can separately display my search results, purely because I prefer clarity, however users have always claimed they like Google because it is simpler to use, and definitely the way Google universal search displays its search results is much simpler then the rest. As far as I can see, very soon Google and even other search engines should allow users to customize their results, and the way the results are displayed, but that is an entirely different topic.

So is Google Universal displaying search results better than similar search engines? Well that depends on who is using the search engine, if you are the kind of user who wants no frills or complications; Google universal search is the way forward, if you like every thing properly catalogued and

displayed, give Ask X and Yahoo Alpha try.

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