: What is the history of DSSResources.com?

by Daniel J. Power

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Since October 2, 1995, DSSResources.com has been the premier resource about computerized Decision Support Systems on the World-Wide Web. That is more than 20 years of continuous operations serving the global decision support and analytics research and practice community.

Many readers know that my "day job" is teaching Information Systems and Business Planning at the University of Northern Iowa. A biographical sketch is online. In the early 1990s, I served as Head of the UNI Management Department and Director of its Information Systems Research Lab (ISRL). During that period, with financial help from the UNI College of Business Administration, donations from a group of Iowa bankers, and grants from Apple Computer and IBM, I was able to purchase some Macintosh computers, printers and an IBM RISC 6000. The lab and our new business building had ethernet connections and the University of Northern Iowa had an Internet connection through the Iowa Communications Network. By 1994 we were surfing the Web and the ISRL had a Web server. In summer 1995, I started accumulating a bookmark list of DSS-related web sites. Also, at about that time I started operating a Web server on a Macintosh IIci in my office. The first Web page I published was my DSS bookmark list.

So DSSResources.com started during summer 1995 as a way of organizing the vast amounts of information on decision support systems found during Webcrawler and Alta Vista searches for DSS-related web sites. As my knowledge of HTML and other Web technologies of the time increased, I started creating other DSS pages. The Web site URL was power.cba.uni.edu running a Quarterdeck WebStar server. The first Web log starts on October 2, 1995. From then until January 1, 1997, the DSS Research Resources web site transmitted more than 300,000 files to visitors from more than 50 countries.

A related resource, the ISWorld DSS Research page was created and submitted to ISWorld on November 29, 1995 by myself, Dan Power, as Editor with Hemant Bhargava and Freddie Quek as co-editors. That page was peer reviewed and accepted for inclusion in ISWorld on September 5, 1996. The page was subsequently included in the ISWorld Hall of Fame. In 1998, the DSS Research page was identified as an ISWorld Top Resource. The ISWorld DSS Research and Teaching pages are now managed by the AIS SIG DSS Resources chair.

From January 16, 1996 to July 31, 1996, I served as Acting Dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Northern Iowa and my Web server moved with me to the Dean's office. During that period the site was little more than a popular bookmark list. My Macintosh had passed its prime so I applied for funding for a Sun Sparc 4 workstation. Receiving the funding was in retrospect a mixed blessing. Most of my Fall 1996 sabbatical was spent conducting research on decision support systems and learning Sun Solaris Unix and the nuances of the Netscape Commerce server software.

In Fall of 1995, Bhargava, Quek and I proposed a workshop on DSS and Web Technologies at the International Federation for Information Processing Working Group 8.3 (IFIP WG 8.3) conference, "Implementing Systems for Supporting Management Decisions: Concepts, Methods, and Experiences" to be held in London, UK, July 21-24, 1996. In June 1996, I prepared version 1 of the DSS Web Tour for presentation at that workshop.

By January 1997, DSS Research Resources had more than 40 Web pages including: DSS Books (Power and Gray); DSS Companies; DSS Glossary; DSS Researchers Directory; DSS Spreadsheet Links; DSS Web Tour; DW/OLAP page; General DSS Related WWW Links; Top 5! DSS web sites; University DSS Links; and Web DSS Demos. Also, by January 1997, the DSS Research Resources home page had received more than 12,000 visitors.

Approximately, 20% of the visitors had been at nodes located at U.S. Universities and more than 30% of the visitors had been at nodes of U.S. and multinational companies including Bell Atlantic, Cray Research, Chevron, Duke Power, Dupont, Hewlett Packard, IBM Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, Polaroid, Sony and Xerox.

The 1996-1999 What's New page at http://dssresources.com/whatsnew/whatsnew96-99.html chronicles approximately 100 major changes to the Web site over a 36 month period. As I was learning about Web technologies, I was also teaching my students about the Web and about Decision Support Systems. My Web work had a positive synergy with my teaching and research.

The Web is ever changing and to keep up, in Spring 1998 the page design was updated and the name of the site and logo was changed to DSS Resources. Also, the domain name DSSResources.com was registered with Internic. In late 1998 and early January 1999, DSS Resources moved to a second generation design with a new logo and format. The revised DSS Resources home page was posted January 15, 1999. By January 1999, it was evident that DSS Resources needed an injection of funds for new hardware and funds for operations. A University environment is a great incubator for experimentation, but in 1999 University rules precluded having an independent domain on a UNI Web server, subscriptions and soliciting advertising. Budgets were tight and the only alternative seemed to be starting a small Web publishing business. So that's what my wife Carol and I did. With the help of my son Alex, we activated the DSSResources.COM web site on September 28, 1999. Rather than operating our own Web server, we outsourced our hosting to Verio. Over the past six years we have outsourced and partnered with a number of companies for various services.

The first issue of DSS News was published May 10, 2000. Interested readers can find other major milestones by checking the What's New? pages at http://dssresources.com/whatsnew/index.html .

DSSResources.COM (Decision Support Systems Resources) is a web-based knowledge repository. The mission "is to help people who are interested in learning about how to use information technologies and software to improve decision making. The target audience is Information Systems

professionals, students, managers interested in MIS and academics in MIS/DSS."
DSSResources.COM is still needed because Decision Support technology is evolving very rapidly.
Despite the proliferation of content on the Web about computerized decision support, IT managers,
IS/T students and IS/T academics face a difficult challenge staying up-to-date about these changes.
DSSResources.COM still serves a need and I enjoy working at the interface between my colleagues
who are building "real world" DSS and those who are studying such systems and teaching the next
generation of practitioners about computerized decision support.

In the coming months, we are hoping to do some things to make DSSResources.COM even more
useful. I am working to make sure the content is an ongoing legacy and resource for the field of
decision support and analytics.

I'm often asked "do you accept articles, case studies and press releases? Do you need field study
sites?" The answer is YES. Please suggest content to feature at our site. DSSResources.com is
intended as an edited, knowledge repository. We also partner with other organization to promote the
use and understanding of computerized decision support systems. Send us your proposals.

Since 1995, my goal has been to provide an outstanding resource about computerized Decision
Support Systems on the World Wide Web. Your favorable feedback and my interest in DSS has
made editing and maintaining DSSResources.COM fun and enjoyable.

We trace our first Web site to October 2, 1995. DSSResources.com started operation as a
commercial venture on September 28, 1999. Help us celebrate our anniversaries!

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