

: How many DSS related pages are on the Web in Fall 2020?

by Daniel Power

For many years, I have been tracking search engine results for the phrases "decision support systems", "decision support", and "DSS". This column reviews past and current results from web searches. Currently in October 2020 a simple search using Google yields the following results "decision support systems" 16,500,000 results, "decision support" 24,200,000 results, and "DSS" 114,000,000 results. The content has increased significantly since AltaVista searches were conducted in 1997.

My DSS News column of December 17, 2000 summarized search results related to DSS pages on the Web. AltaVista was a Web search engine established in 1995 that provided searches of a large database. AltaVista provided word counts and number of pages found in a search. Word count is the number of times the word or phrase appears in documents. In 1997, a search using AltaVista for the phrase "decision support systems" resulted in a word count of about 10,000, "decision support" resulted in a word count of about 50,000; and "DSS" resulted in a word count of more than 51,000.

In October 2000, performing a text search using AltaVista for the phrase "decision support systems" resulted in a word count of about 70,000, "decision support" resulted in a word count of about 330,000, and "DSS" resulted in a word count of 441,000. In 3 years, the number of results had increased significantly.

It was true then and remains true, that if one examines the "hits" or documents found, not all of them are related to decision support in organizations. For example in 2000, if one examined the first search result of about 235,000 matching the query DSS, with the best matches first, the first Web site identified was "Digitized Sky Survey", an archive of digitalized photographic plates from telescopes. An AltaVista search identified many useful links, but it also identified many false leads. However, DSSResources.COM was first in a search for "decision support systems". DSSResources is no longer the first search result, but many pages from the site are highly ranked.

Another popular search program 20 years ago was Lycos. A Lycos search on the phrase "decision support" found 4,067,140 documents, "decision" found 13,507,000 and "support" found 37,682,956. In 1997, a Lycos search on the phrase decision support found 291,439 documents with the words decision (56,604), decisions (34,125) and support (29,295). When one examines the documents returned the results are again a mix of relevant and irrelevant Web sites. Searches using Excite and Google showed similar results.

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A search of YAHOO! presented a more organized view of DSS on the Web in 2000. A search found 79 matches containing "decision support systems"; 221 matches containing "decision support" and 136 matches containing "dss". In 1997, a search found 30 matches containing "decision support systems"; 102 matches containing "decision support" and 46 matches containing "dss". Some matches were irrelevant but in general the links were useful. The links were presented in alphabetical order by YAHOO! category and the categories were very general and often of limited use. A search using Yahoo in 2020 is much different. The results look like a Google search, but no data is presented on the number of results.

Searches at Microsoft's search engine Bing in October 2020 shows 840,000 results for the phrase "decision support systems", 9,680,000 results for "decision support", and 30,900,000 results for "DSS". The results are mixed in terms of relevance and the prioritization of results is unclear.

A current comparison of these same Search terms and topics using Google Trends shows that the interest in DSS, decision support and decision support systems has declined in the United States and Worldwide. The data shows a steep decline in interest during 2004, but the search interest has held steady for the past 15 years. The average interest in DSS is calculated as relative score of 71 and the relative score for the topic decision support system is a 4. So DSS is 18 times more popular in searches than the others search terms. Since 2012 DSS has been a more popular search term than the phrase "information systems". Google Trends was launched May 11, 2006 with data starting from January 1, 2004.

My column in 2000, concluded that "Despite the problems with using search engines to find Decision Support Systems information, the Web is an outstanding source of current, relevant information about DSS software and DSS companies. On the Web people can visit or "surf" sites quickly and easily. The challenge for researchers and managers is to find relevant, organized information on DSS resources available on the Web."

References

Google Trends at URL <https://trends.google.com/>

Power, D., "How many DSS related pages are on the Web?" DSS News, Vol. 1, No. 17, December 17, 2000 at URL <http://dssresources.com/newsletters/17.php>

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