

: How many DSS related pages are on the Web?

One means of finding Web sites relevant to DSS is to use a search engine. Another way is to use a Web index. AltaVista (URL <http://www.altavista.com>) is a search engine that provides searches of a large database. AltaVista provides word count 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 2000, performing a simple text search using AltaVista for the phrase "decision support systems" results in a word count of about 70,000, "decision support" results in a word count of about 330,000, and "DSS" results in a word count of 441,000. The number of results increased from 6 to 10 times in 3 years.

If one examines the "hits" or documents found, not all of them are related to decision support in organizations. For example, if one examines document 1 of about 235,000 matching the query DSS, with the best matches first, the first Web site identified is "Digitized Sky Survey", an archive of digitalized photographic plates from telescopes. However, DSSResources.COM comes first in a search for "decision support systems". An AltaVista search will identify some useful links, but it also identifies many false leads. Also, in a basic search you are limited to the first 200 pages. With some manipulations of the search string, you can view the first 1000. Also, not all of the links identified are still active or working.

Another popular search program is Lycos (URL <http://www.lycos.com/>). Lycos is one of the best Internet search engines in terms of quantity of information and relevancy of results. In 2000, 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.

One of the initial search programs called Webcrawler (URL <http://www.webcrawler.com/>) found fewer matches, and the URLs were not much more relevant. The first five titles of 1470 from the search for the phrase "DSS" show the many diverse links that must be sorted: "The STScI Digitized Sky Survey", "DSS / DirecTV and DirecPC Satellites", "DSS: What's New", "dss test cards decoder free hack cable DSS TEST CARDS cartoo...", and "Digital satellite systems (DSS) products and supplies". The first relevant link is number 6, "ISWorld Decision Support Systems Research".

Searches using Excite (URL <http://www.excite.com>), Google (URL <http://www.google.com>), and Northern Light (URL <http://www.northernlight.com>) show similar results.

Finally, a search of YAHOO! (URL <http://www.yahoo.com/>) presents a more organized view of DSS on the WWW. YAHOO! is the pioneer Internet guide and Web index. It is updated daily and it allows users to both browse and search subject categories. 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 are still irrelevant but in general the links are useful. One main problem for managers and MIS researchers and practitioners is that links need to be registered with YAHOO so the database is incomplete in the area of Decision Support. Second, the links are presented in alphabetical order by YAHOO! category. The categories are very general and often of limited use.

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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. I recommend starting with DSSResources.COM.

updated from Power, D., "How many DSS related pages are on the Web?" DSS News: Vol. 1, No. 17, 12/17/2000.

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Readers can expand this update, but I want to add information from Google searches. Google was a relatively new search engine in December 2000. A search at Google.com using the phrase "decision support systems" returned 41,100,000 results. The first listing was Decision Sciences Web and the Decision Support Systems journal, the top academic journal related to DSS. The next listing was Decision Support Systems Resources -- DSSResources.COM, LLC. A search on "DSS" still yields a mix from Defense Security Service (DSS) Internet Web Site to Digitized Sky Survey (DSS). The fifth result of 2,760,000 is Decision Support Systems Resources -- DSSResources.COM, LLC. The phrase "decision support system" has about 50,300,000 results and "decision support" has about 84,900,000 results.

By way of comparison a search for "business intelligence" yields 55,400,000 results, "data warehouse" returns 10,100,000, "data warehousing" returns 7,280,000, "OLAP" has 1,320,000 results, "GDSS" has 63,700 results, "group decision support system" has 43,200,000, and "executive information systems" has 62,900,000 results.

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