Let someone else do the work

Electronic research is a "must have" skill for anyone required to find and retrieve information. For legal practitioners, electronic research is a part of daily life, but it is not just legal problems where this skill needs to be applied.

For anyone wanting to be informed on current affairs, the internet is like a sponge, soaking up information from an incomprehensible number of sources.

The trick is working out how to squeeze the sponge to get the information you want.

As an example, type "iraq" in a search engine, any search engine. The number and type of pages that are returned is enormous.

The results will provide links ranging from the United Nations to Joe Citizen's individual home page.

Now, you could narrow your search and reduce the number of hits, but generally speaking, you are going to have an overwhelming number of hits.

Further, if you don't really know what you are looking for, narrowing your search is problematic.

There is another way.

Many organisations prepare what are commonly referred to as "internet resource guides" and make them freely available.

How do you find these guides? Well, the easiest way is to search using any internet search engine.

Try "internet resource guide +iraq" you could just try "guide +iraq". (Note my first search was "guide to information on iraq" and this worked fairly well.)

Like any material on the internet it is important you assess the credibility of the information and this will apply to an internet research guide.

The level to which you need to interrogate a website to determine its credibility will depend on the purpose of your research and the intended use of the results.

As a general guide, the following are just a few questions you should be asking yourself:

- Is the author clearly identified or is it anonymous?
- Is the material poorly written (bad grammar, misspelled words etc)?
- Is a date of creation/publication provided?
- Is the information unbiased and objective?
- Is the provider of the information a credible organisation?
- What is the purpose in publishing the information?
- Is contact information provided?

I have found that libraries, particular university or government libraries, provide great internet resource guides.

Internet resource guides are also available for many areas of law.

So if you don't know where to go or want to find something different, try finding an internet resource guide.
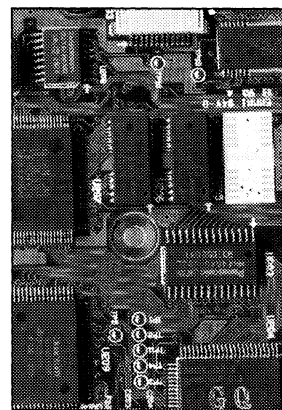
The best part is, someone else has done a lot of the hard work already.

As a starting point, one of my preferred internet resource guides is prepared by the Department of the Parliamentary Library.

General and Subject Resource Guides – http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/resourceguides.htm

Tantrix

Tantrix, the strategy game from New Zealand, consists of hexagonal tiles with multiple painted lines.

The idea is to match the titles creating lines and loops.

Tantrix is utterly addictive as a serious two-player strategy game and can be played online.

Launched in 1996, tantrix.com has become one of the most popular independent game servers on the internet.

Players can create or join games with people around the world or simply practice on the Robot. Players receive rankings and can participate in tournaments.

You can read up on strategy, solve the Tantrix puzzles or simply watch a game in progress.

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