Google's Animal Farm: Implications for your library homepage?

ABSTRACT & BACKGROUND

NON-PUNITIVE

PIGEON
July 24, 2014

HUMMINGBIRD
August 2013

- The Pigeon algorithm update was aimed at improving the quality of local search results
- Hummingbird is a new algorithm, replacing the original Google PageRank-based version
- Hummingbird attempts to provide better quality semantic-based search results [3]
- Neither were aimed at "punishing" a website – rather to improve the searcher's experience

PUNITIVE

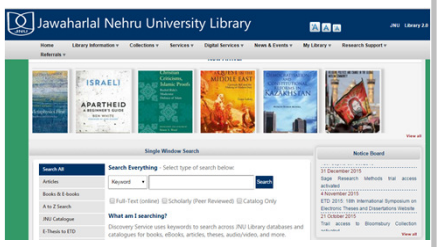
PENGUIN
May 25, 2012

PANDA
February 23, 2011

- The Panda algorithm update focused on down-ranking sites with low-quality and/or stale content
- Penguin was implemented to identify and punish websites with suspect link structures [1]
- Both will penalize a website overstepping its rules, by dropping its ranking or de-indexing it [2]

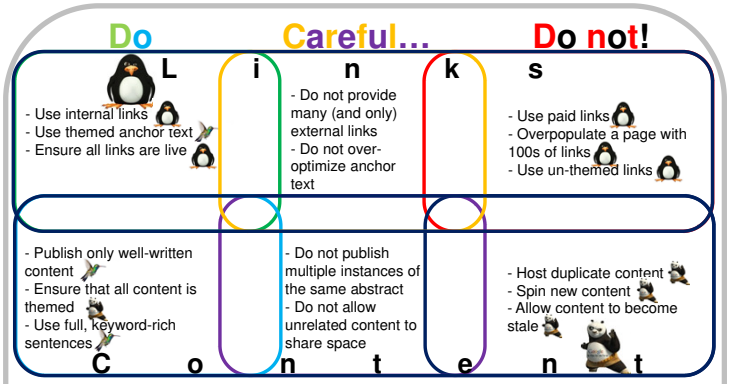
CONTEXT, PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY

- Any website which raises red flags with the search engine algorithms, whether intended or accidental, is at risk. Search engines can drop these website rankings on their result pages, or even ban them from their indices [2]
- University library websites are often content-rich, and could span many thousands of webpages. This could result in duplicate content, and also the possibility of having stale content



- University library websites could also contain hundreds or even thousands of links to other resources, other libraries and theses hosted elsewhere. This link-richness could lead to incorrect interpretation by a search engine algorithm as being link spamdexing
- The purpose of this research was to identify the danger points in website content and structure for university webpages, and design a model to address problems stemming from search engine algorithm penalties
- The methodology was based on triangulation between the literature survey, empirical experiments done on university library websites and personal observation

RESULTS, IMPLICATIONS, SIGNIFICANCE



- Implications: The implications of this research include that university library website designers should rethink the content and structure of the sites they develop/maintain. Also, the prescriptions of current and future algorithm updates must be considered
- Significance: A study of this nature, specifically aimed at university libraries, has not been recorded before. Implementation of its results could have far-reaching effects on the view search engines have of university library websites

REFERENCES

[1] Sullivan, D. (2015). Irony Alert: Could Alphabet's Hidden Link To Hooli Get It Banned In Google? http://searchengineland.com/alphabet-hidden-link-to-hooli-227610 [28 September 2015]

[2] Weideman, M. (2009). Website Visibility: The Theory and Practice of Improving Rankings. Chandos Publishing: Oxford. http://www.worldcat.org/title/website-visibility-the-theory-and-practice-of-improving-rankings/oclc/517399476

[3] Weideman, M. & Strümpfer, C. (2004). The effect of search engine keyword choice and demographic features on Internet searching success. Information Technology and Libraries, 23(2), 58-65.

Melius Weideman

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Website Attributes Research Centre, CPUT, Cape Town