

Case Study - Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Background

The ABC is Australia's largest media network. It operates a multi-faceted website that contains 3 million pages, catering for about 23 million page views and 27 million hits each week.

The ABC news site is one of the most popular websites in Australia. It is updated every hour at a rate of about 50 new stories. The large index size and query volumes, coupled with the need to provide fresh searchable content, places heavy demands on the Funnelback search facilities.

Other sections of the ABC site such as the ABC Shop and Wild Online database - are commercial operations that enable visitors to make purchases online.

Funnelback has provided search for the ABC since early 2002. Search queries average about 1.7 million queries a month across all the collections. Queries for related stories average more than 12 million requests per month.

Search features can be accessed at www.abc.net.au, www.abc.net.au/news and www.shop.abc.net.au.

The Need

A tunable, scalable search engine that is capable of coping with the number of pages and varied requirements of the ABC website. The selected search solution had to be efficient and accurate to ensure the ABC provided its customers with high quality, relevant and up to date results.

The Solution

After evaluating a number of commercial search products, the ABC selected Funnelback Server for the search on its website.

Funnelback Server is loaded on multiple in-house servers at the ABC. The search covers web pages, images, multimedia, radio and tape archives, XML and database searches.

A range of exciting features on the News website have recently been launched. They include geospatial, multimedia and contextual navigation. The geospatial search tool allows users to see on a map where news stories occur, as well as where other news

stories occur nearby. The multimedia search provides search over multiple multimedia formats, including video, audio and images. Users can view results in a range of playlist formats, or simply use a browser-embedded media player.

Funnelback's contextual navigation algorithm provides search results through a browsable, hierarchical interface. This allows users to drill down into more focused queries.

Tuned Search

The ABC's implementation of Funnelback Server has been tuned to allow different criteria to be weighted for optimal ranking of search results.

While most of the site uses a relevance index that ranks the most relevant results at the top, the ABC News section returns search results that are ranked according to time and date, ranking the most recent stories at the top.

RSS Search

Funnelback Server is also being used on the ABC's Custom RSS site, where users can create their own custom RSS feed based on search results.

Each time a new story appears in the ABC

search index, the end-user's RSS reader will update its listings based on the change.

Increased Sales

The ABC Shop's search results are each accompanied with a 'buy' button and an image of the product. These features are retrieved by Funnelback from a database. After implementing Funnelback on the ABC Shop site, sales on the site increased by 24%.

The multimedia search facility implemented in the Wild Online section allows customers to purchase sound and vision footage. The results are retrieved from an XML data repository. Funnelback allows the ABC to capitalise on its vast array of available content.

Improves Workflow

Funnelback's nimble workflow engine allows the ABC to tune the index building process at any stage. For example, web content can be merged with related database content, additional metadata can be inserted and unwanted pages can be removed from the index via this workflow.

Local Support

Funnelback's local support ensures the ABC site search is always optimised to include Funnelback Server's latest features.



The screenshot shows the ABC News website search interface. The search bar contains the text 'shark' and the search button is labeled 'Search'. Below the search bar, the query is 'shark --' and the results are 'Documents: 269 fully matching plus 0 partially matching'. The first result is titled 'Shark attack victim recovering' and includes a small image of a man in a hospital bed. The text of the result reads: 'A man, 24, is recovering from emergency surgery after fighting off a two-metre shark at a beach south of Adelaide at the weekend. .'. Below the text are tags: 'disasters-and-accidents emergency-incidents human-interest animals human-interest animal-attacks human-interest animal-attacks shark australia sa australia sa adelaide-5000 australia sa normanville-5204'. The URL is 'http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/11/09/2736717.htm - 24k - [html] - 9 Nov 2009 - 2 hours ago'. There is a 'Show in Map' button. The second result is titled 'Swimmers put on alert after shark attack' and includes a small image of a group of people. The text of the result reads: 'Swimmers have been ordered to stay close to shore around Normanville, south of Adelaide, near the scene of a shark attack this morning. .'. Below the text are tags: 'human-interest animal-attacks human-interest animal-attacks shark australia australia sa australia sa adelaide-5000 australia sa normanville-5204 australia sa second-valley-5204'. On the right side of the search results, there is a sidebar with 'Currently browsing...' and 'Search Terms' (shark). Below that is 'Have you tried...' with 'Shark By Type' and a list of categories: Cronulla... (24), Nurse... (16), Coast... (12), White Pointer... (9), Live... (6), Great White... (6), Frozen... (6), Monster... (4), Port Jackson... (3), Open Water... (3). At the bottom of the sidebar is 'Shark By Topic' with a list of categories: ...Attack (249), ...Nets (73), ...Bay (37), ...Park (31), ...Fin (28), Bitten by a Shark (12), ...Creek (10).