Ethics and Law on the Web

Information Retrieval

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Main Point

- Just because *you can* doesn't mean *you should*

Guidelines for Bot Writers

- An old but still relevant text
  - http://www.robotstxt.org/guidelines.html
- Summary
  - **Be Accountable** - if your actions cause problems, be available to take *prompt* action in response;
  - **Test Locally** - expand the scope gradually before you unleash your crawler on others;
  - **Don't hog resources** – web servers are for people primarily
  - **Stay with it** - "it's vital to know what your robot is doing, and that it remains under control".

Guidelines for Bot writers

- Find out the sites' crawling policies
  - E.g. sourceforge:
  - http://sourceforge.net/apps/trac/sitelegal/wiki/Crawler%20policy
- Contact the Web admins

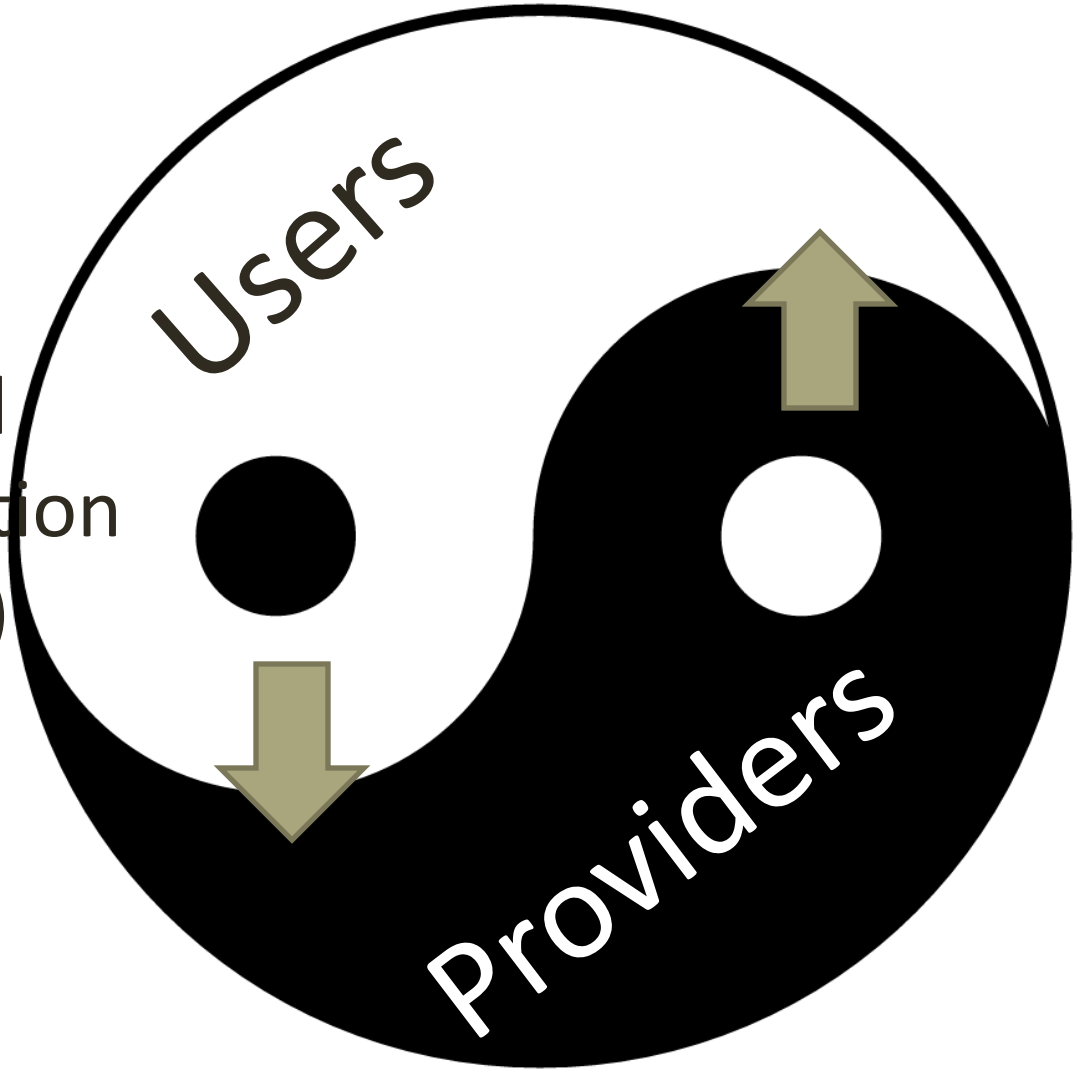
Ethics and Law

The Web and the Law

- Web: almost 20 years old (your age!)
- Wild Wild West, for the most part
  - Very few laws
  - Existing laws either untested or outdated
- Our own judgments/actions matter

Who can offend who

Personal Information (Privacy)



Content (Security)

Privacy Statements

- Web sites may have privacy statements
  - What info they collect, how it's used
- E.g. http://uci.edu/privacy.php

Privacy – Apache Log

66.249.66.18 - - [25/Jan/2012:00:18:27 -0800] "GET /xwiki/bin/export/Stats/CurrentYearActivity?format=rtf HTTP/1.1" 404 335 "-" "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Googlebot/2.1; +http://www.google.com/bot.html)”

180.76.6.28 - - [25/Jan/2012:00:18:31 -0800] "GET / HTTP/1.1" 200 45 "-" "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Baiduspider/2.0; +http://www.baidu.com/search/spider.html)”

66.249.66.18 - - [25/Jan/2012:00:19:02 -0800] "GET /calswim/coverage-s1.png HTTP/1.1" 200 961543 "-" "Googlebot-Image/1.0”

173.192.98.90 - - [25/Jan/2012:00:33:00 -0800] "GET / HTTP/1.1" 404 290 "-" "Python-urllib/2.4”

80.165.186.186 - - [25/Jan/2012:01:21:24 -0800] "GET /events-dataset-api/ HTTP/1.1" 200 3214 "http://www.kdnuggets.com/datasets/index.html" "Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 5.1; rv:9.0.1) Gecko/20100101 Firefox/9.0.1”

180.76.5.65 - - [25/Jan/2012:02:18:20 -0800] "GET / HTTP/1.1" 200 45 "-" "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Baiduspider/2.0;

Terms of Use

- Web sites may have Terms of Use, or Terms of Service
  - Sometimes there is an explicit step for users to accept them
  - Most times there isn't
- Express wishes from providers
- e.g. http://www.cnn.com/interactive_legal.html
- Bot writers: look for this

Copyrights

- Products of intellect are ruled by “Copyright Law”
- Web content, source code, etc. are products of intellect

Copyrights

- http://www.copyright.gov/

- (next slides taken from here)

What is Copyright?

- http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html

“Fair Use”

- Various purposes for which the reproduction of a particular work may be considered fair
  - Criticism, comment, news, teaching, scholarship, and research
  - It’s a grey area

- http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html

“Fair Use”

- four factors to be considered in determining whether or not a particular use is fair:
  - The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
  - The nature of the copyrighted work
  - The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
  - The effect of the use upon the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work

Legal Case Studies

- eBay vs. Bidder's Edge
  - eBay successfully stopped crawlers from Bidder's Edge
  - "trespass to chattels"
- American Airlines vs. FareChase
  - Online fare comparisons