

The Syzygy Surfer: Creative Technology for the World Wide Web

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses our development of a new Web engine, the Syzygy Surfer, which aims to induce a search/browsing experience that is more creative than traditional search. We do this by purposefully combining the ambiguity of natural language with the precision of Semantic Web technologies. Here we set out the framework for our investigation and discuss the context and background ideas that are informing the research. The paper offers some preliminary examples taken from our work in progress on the device and suggests the way ahead for future developments and applications.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

Not Applicable [Web Science] – *Creative Technology*

General Terms

None of the listed 16

Keywords

Pataphysics, Semantic Web, Panalogy

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the Web may be used for creative pursuits, the typical interaction between a user, artist or otherwise, and the Web is generally not supportive of creative endeavors. This is somewhat ironic because, in the early days, using the World Wide Web was all about serendipity and creativity in a way that has been largely lost as it has grown and been commercialized. Many users don't even realize that the Web was originally designed to "browse" and "explore," surfing has become a term for the secure journey to a well-regarded site full of safe (by the user's own standards) content.

What would be the requirements of a creative technology, a surfing (not search) engine for the creative technologist? Firstly, simple randomness will not be enough. Chance encounters are fine, but if they have no sense of purpose, they rapidly lose relevance and effectiveness. The key is to retain the element of surprise while at the same time avoiding a succession of complete non-sequiturs and irrelevant content. What is required, instead, is an underlying *poetic* sense of unity. Consider this quotation from Jorge-Luis Borges' story *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*, which describes 'a certain Chinese Encyclopedia,' the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, in which it is written that animals are divided into:

- those that belong to the Emperor,
- embalmed ones,
- those that are trained,
- suckling pigs,
- mermaids,
- fabulous ones,
- stray dogs,
- those included in the present classification,
- those that tremble as if they were mad,
- innumerable ones,
- those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush,
- others,
- those that have just broken a flower vase,
- those that from a long way off look like flies.

If the Web could categorize resources into categories such as these, and deliver a set of responses that could deliver this level of charming surprise, and in a way that is creatively useful, then we have a tool which artists will really value.

Harnessing the creative intelligence of the web provides the potential for a new way of working, one in which its semantic content is able to interact in effective dialogue with the user in order to throw up creative ideas. The applications of this tool could be to the origination of artworks, but also to challenging areas such as browsing rich data collections (e.g. large libraries, media archives, and so on). What is required is a tool which engages with the user's subjectivity in a way that is uniquely personalised and yet intelligent in itself, purposefully purposeless, capable of operating a creative loop that is dynamic yet exhibits a sense of underlying poetic unity. In other words, the web could become the ideal creative partner if only it understood better what you want, what you mean, what you need, and, more, was able to come up with things you didn't realise you want meant, or needed, but were pleased to discover when you found them.

2. PATAPHYSICS AND PANALOGY

Our prototype of this kind of "creative encounter engine" generates the ambiguity described above by combining an idea from a philosophical tradition that is particularly human and unlikely to be representable on the machine at any time in the foreseeable future with a technical architecture that was designed specifically as a mechanism for representing on a machine much-more-human cognitive behaviors. The philosophical tradition in question is *pataphysics*, defined by Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) as

“the science of imaginary solutions” and resting on “the truth of contradictions and exceptions.”

Since the Semantic Web’s metadata is based on exactly the avoidance of this kind of inconsistency and ambiguity, we require a new approach in order to make ‘syzygy surfers’ of the users. Since “pataphysics is to metaphysics as metaphysics is to physics”, so we can consider what lies beyond metadata to be *patadata*.

We draw our technical inspiration from the concept of panalogy (parallel analogy) put forth by Push Singh and Marvin Minsky. The idea behind panalogy is that our understanding of any object or action cannot easily be explained in any single conceptualization. Thus, a panalogy may become a way to conceptualize a computational model for introducing ambiguity, because the same object may be formally ontologized in a number of ways. The ambiguity of experience is the hallmark of creativity, that is captured in the essence of pataphysics. Traversing the representations of this ambiguity using algorithms inspired by the *syzygy*, *clinamen* and *anomaly* of pataphysics, using a panalogical mechanism applied to metadata, should be able to humanize and even poeticize the experience of searching the Web.

3. SYZYGY SURFER

The syzygy surfer therefore works by taking input from a user and generating a panalogic patadata structure for each entry. We explore examples on the various searches (see “fabulous”, “mermaid” and “trained” below) and show how the engine can be used for image and multimedia syzygy surfing.

Mermaid: Clinamen

Second Century Links
 For the links to the *Centaur* info please go to that page. ... I have before posted accounts of this nature pertaining to where the *centaur* may have really come from. ... Robin, A print or painting for sale. ... Starbucks's SweetFloor Valley, Cute alert! This site contains those cute little adoption buns rDn ...
[forward:artifacts:retrofits&view=](#) - Cached - Similar

Centaur Launches New Sports Betting Hedge Fund Designed To Exploit ...
 Mar 25, 2010 ... Centaur Corporate is launching the Gallop Fund, which will trade in ... Print E-mail ... Starbucks hopes free songs, e-books lure customers 10:18:10 ... East Bay's 20 best nature walks and ... Yosemite premiere ...
[www.ajc.com/article-0371-centaur](#) - Cached

Vigilant Citizen :: View topic - Starbucks & Occult Themes ...
 15 posts - 15 authors - Last post: May 11
 The only people in Canada who drink Starbucks are hipsters or rich ... debate about the nature of normal sexuality and, specifically ...
[vigilantcitizen.com/forums.php?i=284_print](#) - Cached

Jellybean events with electric snakefang, Edgar Allan Poe ...
 Sep 28, 2010 ... Edgar Allan Poe @ Starbucks.com ... Scottish JukeboxPhonics don't write this ... to a third anniversary centaur takeover ... Pataphysics Print Shop West, 2 days ago ... SOMETHING IS IN THE WORKS ... 4 days ago Nature ...
[jellybeanevents.blogspot.com/edgar-allen-poe-starbucks.com](#) - Cached

my Thrills Issue 2 print ...
 File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat - View as HTML
 Oopsy daisy of Autumn spread out upon nature's floor ... this issue are on Howard Schultz (Founder of Starbucks) and Maria Antonelli (No Substituter) ... violent story of the Lucine and Centaurs from Ovid's epic Metamorph ...
[www.thrillsmagazine.com/Thrills_Issue_2.pdf](#) - Similar




Figure 2: Clinamen operation

Fabulous: Syzygy

My St. Margarets Summer 2010
 Three bedroom apartment set in a beautiful mansion block Communal Tennis Court ... food and a warm atmosphere and we look forward to welcoming you in the future. ... Here are a few of the fabulous homes for sale from Dealers in St ... or the hard work to stop Tesco from abusing the leading boys and bus stops. ...
[www.commystmargarets.com/my_st_margarets_summer_2010](#) - Cached

Bean Sprouts, March 2007
 Bed 3 - Legumes, beans, peas etc. Bed 4 - Broccoli, cabbages, ... Cold Mountain - fabulous performance from Rames Zafwager getting stuck into vegetable-growing ... from animals fed on GM ingredients I will avoid it religiously in future. ... How to grow more vegetables (and fruits, nuts, berries, grains, ...
[bean-sprouts.blogspot.com/2007_03_01_archive.html](#) - Cached

London - The Anglicophile
 Churchill had a bedroom in the BUNGER-not much of a bedroom. ... a passage I take almost every day to go to Tesco's for my breakfast supplies. ... But I think my readers will see the fabulous personality behind that ... September 3, 2010 ... eager to book passage for the ship's future travels around the Globe. ...
[blog.londonconnection.com/?page=3](#) - Cached

my Blend Issue 05 - 2010 awards - the winners revealed Exciting ...
 File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat - Quick View
 and we saw more "fabulous food" than ever before at our judging event held on 2nd ... seed bed of future talent. I do visit lots of Colleges. ...
[www.fashion.co.uk/blends/issue05_fruit.pdf](#)

Double Glazing
 The inner one is black to absorb light and a reflector behind it helps maximise light capture ... Regeneration for the future - North West Evening Mail ... Eden Grove, London, 3 bedroom flat. Three bedroom apartment in Vauxhall. ... A fabulous opportunity to purchase a traditional-style Spanish villa. ...
[www.rentandown.com/real-estate/uk/double-glazing-15.html](#) - Cached





Figure 1: Syzygy operation

Trained: Anomaly

trained - definition of trained by the Free Online Dictionary ...
 A series of connected railroad cars pulled or pushed by one or more locomotives. 2. A long line of moving people, animals, or vehicles. ...
[www.thefreedictionary.com/trained](#) - Cached - Similar

Videos for trained -medicine -math -job

	Trained Cat Doing Number 2 52 sec - Apr 8, 2008 Uploaded by henryhus youtube.com		Mike Tyson Training Highlight Part From week ... 3 min - Jun 6, 2007 Uploaded by StevenR14 youtube.com
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Bridge employees trained to spot suspicious behavior ...
 Jun 16, 2010 ... Employees who work on authority's five spans are being trained to spot the seven signs a bridge may be targeted by terrorist. And they are. ...
[www.industryweek.com/_NYUSA_security-16Jun10.html](#) - Cached

Clicker Training ...
 Karen Pryor method of operant conditioning using clickers to manage animal behavior.
[www.clickertraining.com/](#) - Cached - Similar

News for trained -medicine -math -job

Antonio Margerita's training days ... 4 hours ago
 He's sure training for it. In Antonio Margerita's training diary, the boxer offers an overview of his preparations -- on both a personal and professional ...
 ESPN - 343 related articles




Figure 3: Anomaly operation

We are currently implementing this algorithm both for the open Web (where we will use the results of a commercial search engine as the basis for our searches) and in a domain dependent way, aimed at exploring large collections such as the holding of the British Library or the Institut National Audiovisuel Français, where we can preprocess many of the terms and relationships for an efficient search and to be sure that the results remain surprising but useful.

Interface design will be an important aspect of the finished Syzygy Surfer. Our early thoughts about this rest on a few guiding principles: the user should be able to choose the techniques they use; the system will suggest terms that the user could add or change in their searches; there should be a 'breadcrumb trail' of navigation, so that users can readily find their way back to a previous instance; the look and feel should reflect the underlying workings of the engine, but at the same time be attractive, accessible and adaptable.

4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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5. REFERENCES

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