Attract Links to Your Site

- Links are the largest factor in determining a page's reputation

- This chapter covers:

    – Why search engines value links

    – Your link-building philosophy

    – Step-by-step link building for your site

Why search engines value links

- Useful links are created intentionally
  - A link does not have to exist
  - A link is often the result of a selection among multiple options
  - The basis of the WWW!

- Links can be considered as recommendations
  - Much like scholarly citations
  - Existence of many in-links suggests a quality target
  - Recommendations can be for trustworthiness, authority, quality, etc.

How web sites link

This example shows an internal link.

We are more concerned with external links (between sites) that are considered to be more objective.

Every link you see on a page in your browser . . .

. . . is generated by a link tag in the page's HTML in a prescribed format:

The link tag's name (<a>) stands for "anchor."

The "href" parameter identifies the URL of the page to link to.
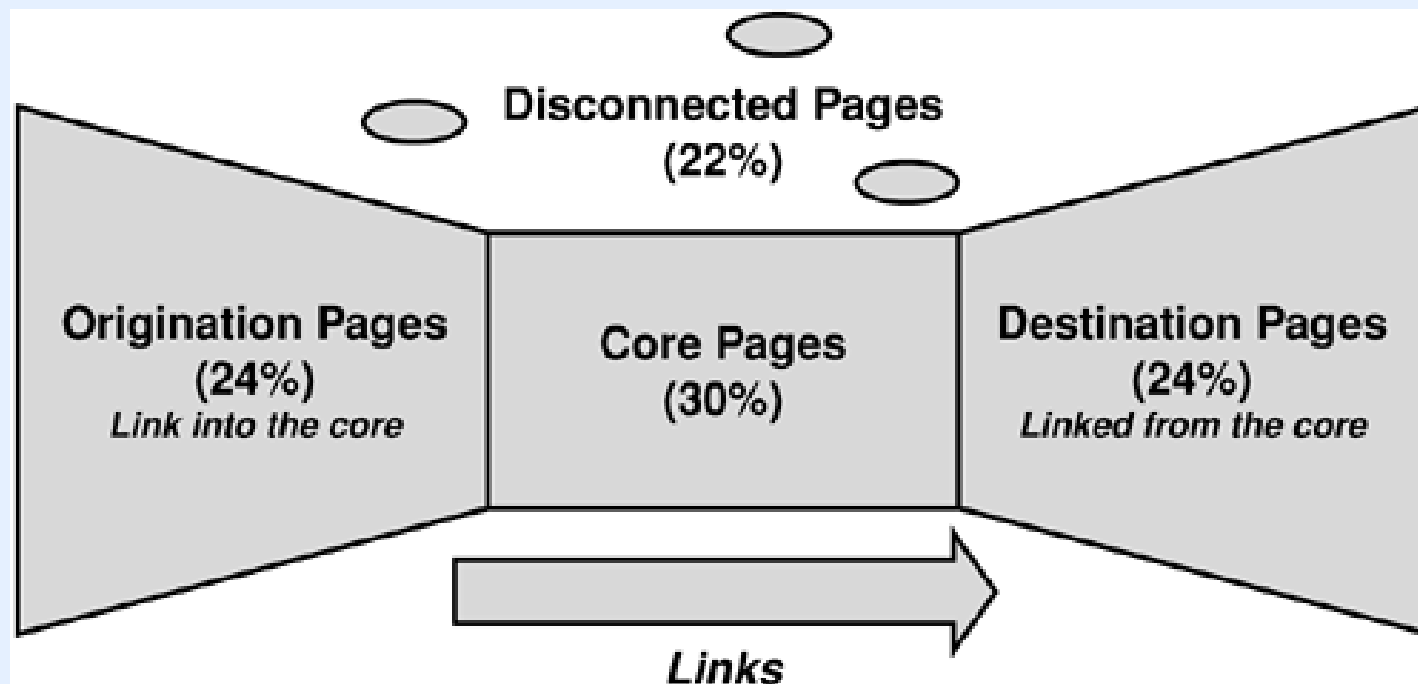
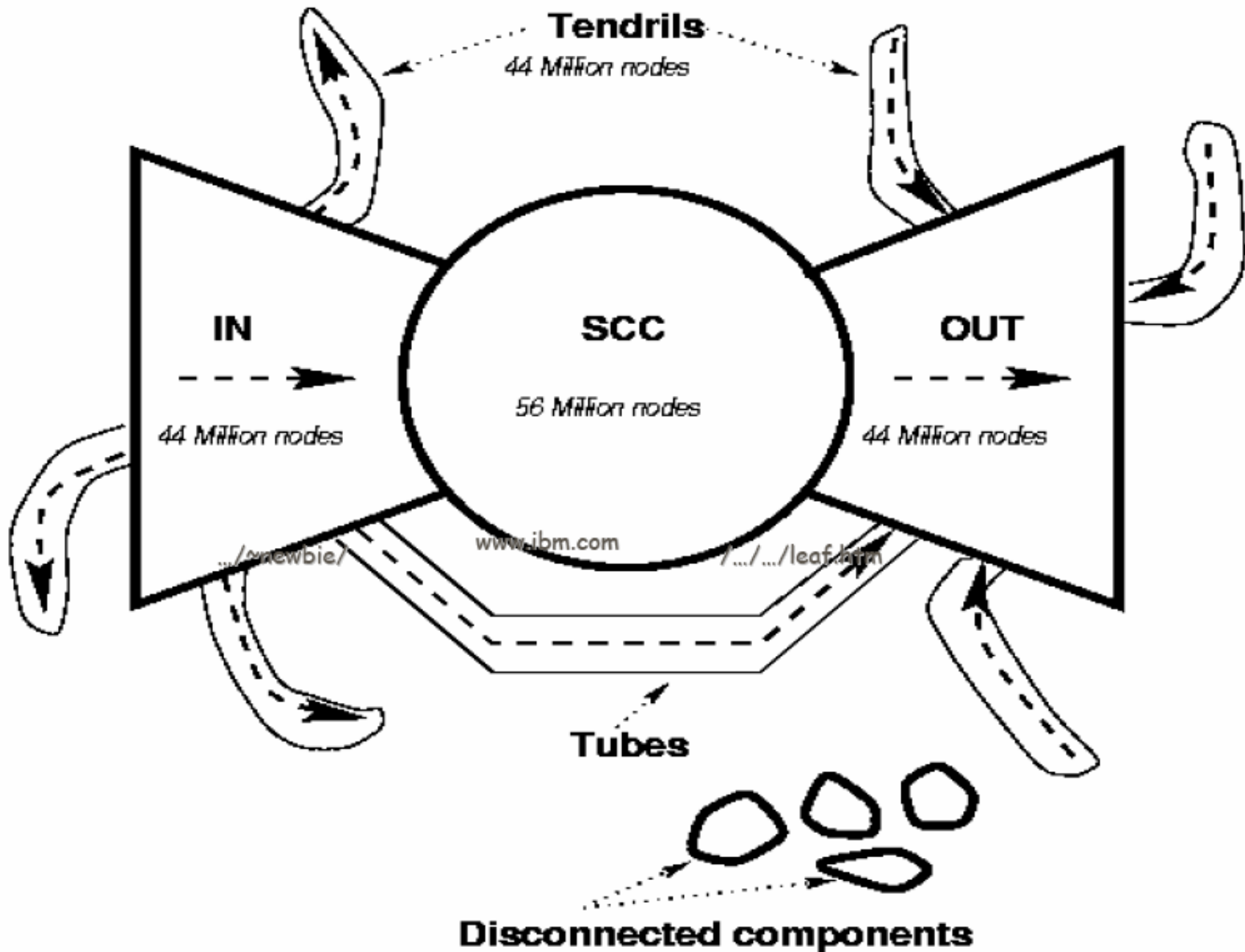The "anchor text" (what displays on the page).

The end anchor tag ().

`<a href="http://www.ibm.com/services/">Business & IT services</a>`

How web sites link

- Global view is of a bow-tie (Broder et al., 2000)

Broder et al., 2000

How link popularity works

- Link popularity has two parts
  - Anchor text which is interpreted as part of target document (as in "miserable failure" example)
    - Query matches to anchor text is a significant factor in ranking, too, not just filtering
  - Linkage interpreted as votes for target's importance/quality/authority/trustworthiness
    - More links are better than fewer links
    - Links from high quality pages better than links from low quality pages
    - Links from contextually relevant pages are better than links from non-relevant pages

Web Link Analysis

- There are two foundational approaches (from 1998) to web link analysis

  - Page and Brin's PageRank: a page's value is based on the number and quality of links pointing to it (and the number of links those parent pages have)

  - Kleinberg's HITS: a page's hub value depends on the number+quality of targets, and a page's authority value depends on the number and quality of the hubs that point to it

- Many variations and improvements since then

- Also consider site/domain/host authority

Your linking philosophy

- Links are important for ranking, but also for traffic!

- Don't just try to find links that match what you think the search engine is looking for

  - Any links, big site links, deep links, one-way links, purchasing links – fads with some truth

  - Search engines continue to adjust to

    - Use of spamming techniques, e.g., link farms, hidden links, blog/guestbook/discussion board spamming

    - Suddenly "authoritative" sites

Your linking philosophy

- Think about visitors first---visitors that follow links can be qualified and likely to convert

  - Links from sites with lots of traffic
  - Links from sites related to yours
  - Links from sites with little link competition

- Yes, **target links from high-traffic sites related to yours that do not have many other links**

- Yes, the harder a link is to get, the more valuable it is likely to be

Think about links from your site

- You need an outbound link philosophy too

- You want to link to

  - High quality, credible sites (regardless of search engine ranking)

  - Sites with content related to yours

  - Places that reflect well on your credibility (both for visitors and search engines)

- What links would your visitors appreciate?

Step-by-step link building

- Make your site a link magnet...

- Perform a link audit...

- Identify sources of links...

- Negotiate your links...

Make your site a link magnet

- Create **excellent** content/services to others

  - Valuable or authoritative information

  - Useful tool

- Think about why others might want to link to your site (or pages within it)

- Create content or services for others to use and link back to you ("Powered by...")

- Optimize link landing pages

  - Provide outstanding content; never change topic; use link-friendly URLs

Perform a link audit

- Analyze every link to your landing page (or site)

- Get a count of back links
  - Currently use Yahoo! instead of Google for more accurate counts

- A number of tools can be helpful
  - Some free, some up to a few hundred dollars
  - Count links, finds existing links to competitors, score potential link sources (traffic, relevance, PageRank)

- Don't forget to audit your competitors as well
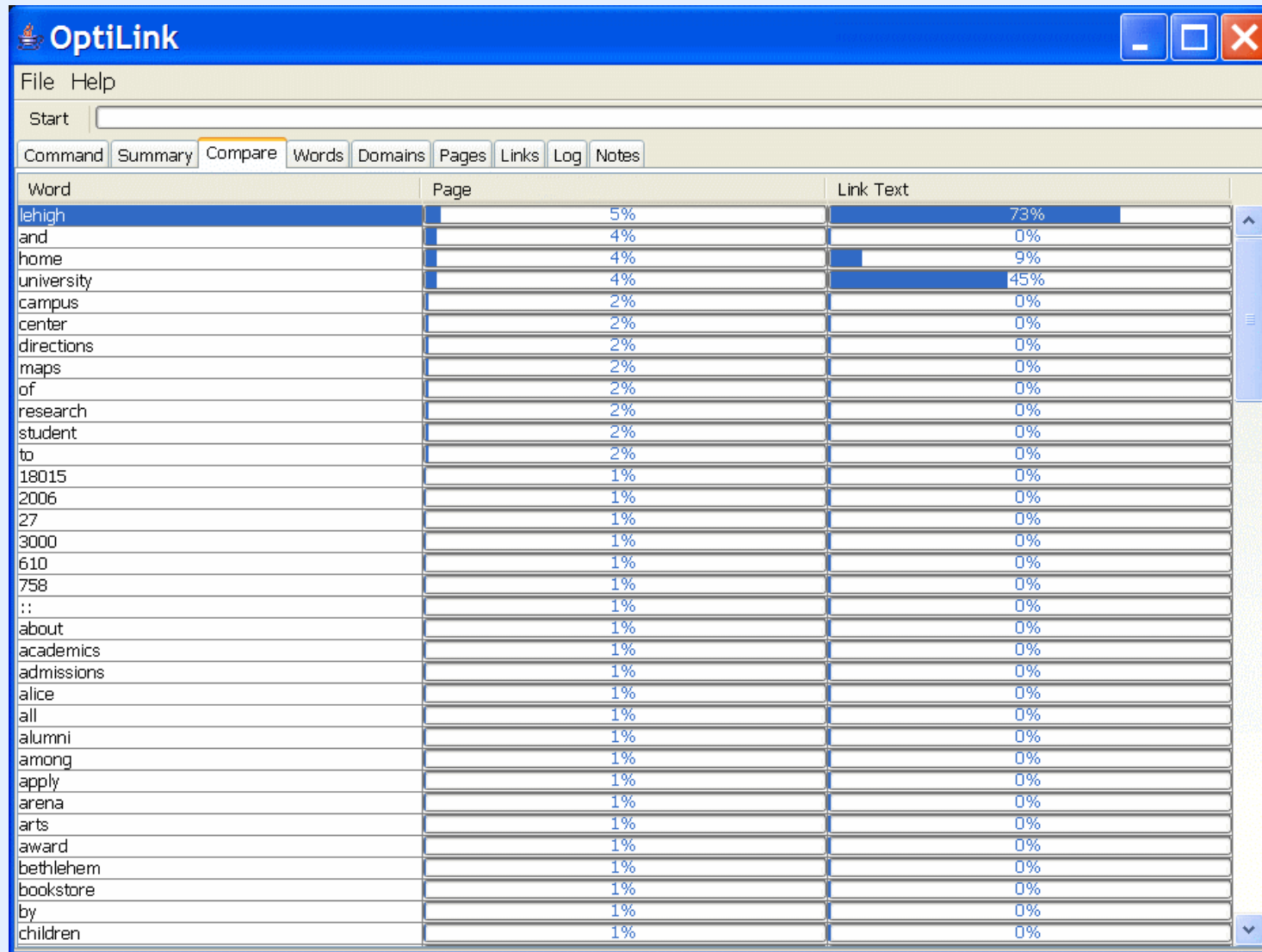 - Learn why successful, find weaknesses, spam

MarketLeap

Free web service

Compares multiple host link counts across engines.

OptiLink

Download. 10 HotBot links for free; $149 full version.
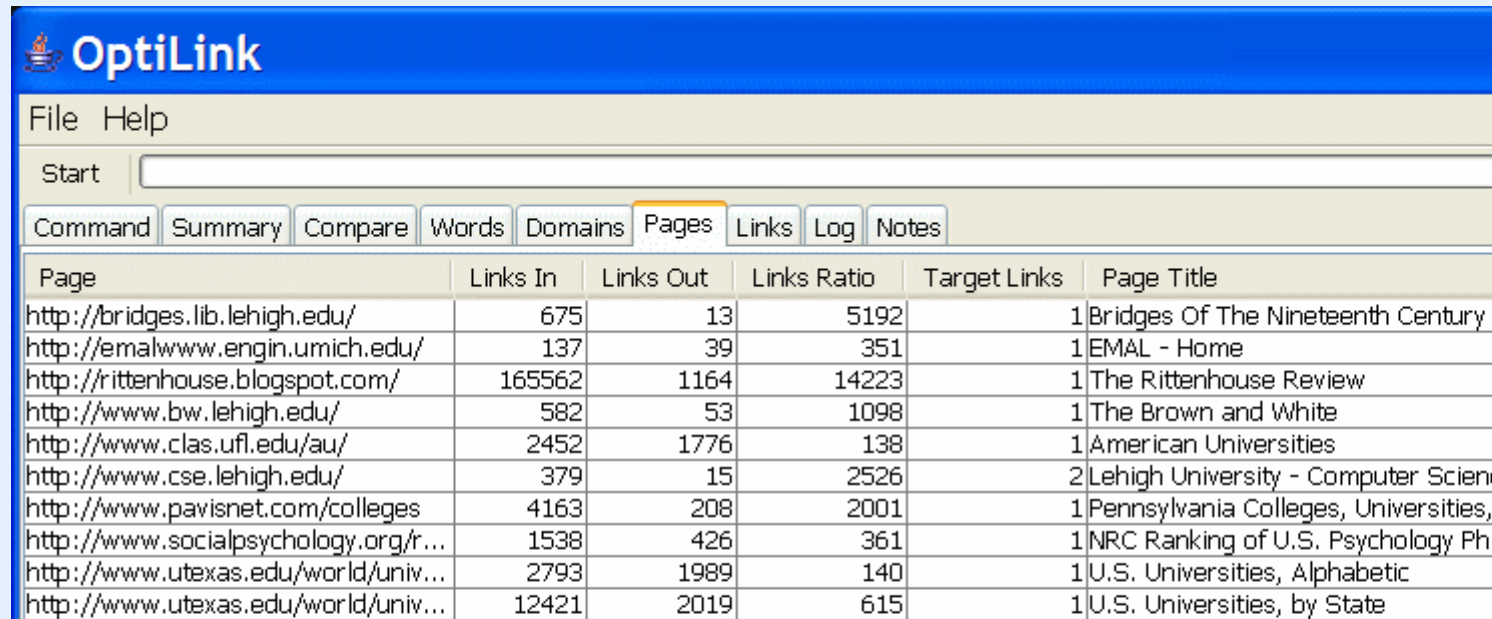
Analyzes link text, word content, link counts.

OptiLink

Download. 10 HotBot links for free; $149 full version.

Analyzes link text, word content, link counts.

OptiLink

File   Help

Start

| Command | Summary | Compare | Words | Domains | Pages | Links | Log | Notes |

Page	Links In	Links Out	Links Ratio	Target Links	Page Title
http://bridges.lib.lehigh.edu/	675	13	5192	1	Bridges Of The Nineteenth Century
http://emalwww.engin.umich.edu/	137	39	351	1	EMAL - Home
http://rittenhouse.blogspot.com/	165562	1164	14223	1	The Rittenhouse Review
http://www.bw.lehigh.edu/	582	53	1098	1	The Brown and White
http://www.clas.ufl.edu/au/	2452	1776	138	1	American Universities
http://www.cse.lehigh.edu/	379	15	2526	2	Lehigh University - Computer Scien
http://www.pavisnet.com/colleges	4163	208	2001	1	Pennsylvania Colleges, Universities,
http://www.socialpsychology.org/r...	1538	426	361	1	NRC Ranking of U.S. Psychology Ph
http://www.utexas.edu/world/univ...	2793	1989	140	1	U.S. Universities, Alphabetic
http://www.utexas.edu/world/univ...	12421	2019	615	1	U.S. Universities, by State

Edit   List   View   Tools   Settings   Help

Add Sites Assistant...   Add Site...   Manage Sites   Create Link Pages...   Check Links...   Settings

URL	Your Link...	Status	Category	Links ...	Include I...	PR	Traffic ...	Email	Releva...	Added	Last Email	Link Ch...	Link Ch
members.internet...	Universit...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	8	94102	memb...	100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.mit.edu:800...	Colleges ...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	7	n/a	referen...	100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
rittenhouse.blogs...	The Ritte...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	7	18	getting...	100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.skypoint.co...	John Mat...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	3	562859	jkm@...	100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.rit.edu/~gtfs...	BioMedic...	Undec ∨	My Cat ∨	☑	☑	4	2373532	gtfsbi...	100 ⇕	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.smargon.net...	College ...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	5	955812	adam...	100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.univsource.c...	Colleges,...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	5	193368		100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.socialpsych...	NRC Ran...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	6	148437		100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.philly1.com/...	Links: Ph...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	5	667025		100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not
www.programix.c...	Paul Hyd...	Undec...	My Cat...	☑	☑	4	4795724		100	11/26/2006	not yet	○ Not ...	not

Preview Site (Ctrl+F1)   Edit Selected Site (F2)   Send Email To Selected Site (F3)

http://www.rit.edu/~gtfsbi/Symp/bme.htm   Go   Services

Co-op/Internship Opportunities for 2007

related to

Biomedical Engineering

Some links will require the **Adobe Acrobat Reader** to read pdf format.
If you don't have a copy on your computer, click **here** for a free download
All co-ops/internships listed are PAID, unless otherwise indicated
Skip the introduction and
Go to Co-op/Internship Postings

Identify sources of potential links

- Internal links
  - Not significant for authority calculations
  - From your own pages – optimize the anchor text!
- Relational links
  - Relationships – suppliers, customers, etc.
  - Often easiest and most valuable links
  - Can exert influence on anchor text and target URL
  - Also consider sponsorships, trade associations
  - Press releases (in electronic form) often generate links

Identify sources of potential links

- Solicited links
    - When you request that a site operator link to you
    - Only bother if
        - The site contains credible, well-written information
        - The site content is strongly related to yours
        - The site's visitors are the kind you want
        - The site is not a competitor
    - Directories are a great source of links
        - And additional, relevant potential link sources
    - Others: trade magazines, bloggers, related sites, personal network

Identify sources of potential links

- Paid links

  - Sometimes helpful if you need to raise rankings quickly

  - More common than it used to be (may need to pay for solicited links)

  - Search engines will devalue such links when it can identify them

    - Look for patterns that are associated with paid links
    - The "sandbox effect" prevents sites from sudden increases in PageRank

  - Use paid links to drive qualified traffic, and use the increased rank as a bonus!

Negotiate your links

- Why should the potential source link to you?

  - Paid links – to be safe, make it a professional transaction

  - Solicited links – what can you offer?

    - Information of value
    - Discounts for their visitors

  - Relational links – based on existing relationship

    - You might be able to require a link

  - Internal links – might need to request links from other parts of organization

Requesting the link

- Contact a **person**
  - Person's name + email

- Use a strong subject line
  - Want recipient to open the message, but not look like spam

- K.I.S.S.
  - No HTML. No pictures. No colors. You want the email to read perfectly in any mail reader.

- Demonstrate that you've done your homework
  - Show that you've visited the site (perhaps with a compliment) and that this is not a form letter.

- Sell the idea
  - Explain why the link would be good for their visitors

Requesting the link

- Specify the desired source page
    - Which one makes the most sense, not the highest PageRank
- Specify the page to link to
    - Your home page? A product page?
    - Complete, easy to type URL
- Ask for a response within a definite time period
    - Helpful if the request is legitimately urgent
- Keep careful track of where you send, who responds and how
    - Many tools can help

nofollow links

- In 2005, major search engines and blog vendors agreed on a new type of link: nofollow

  – Designed to reduce incentive for comment spam

- A nofollow link is a regular link with an additional type specified "rel=nofollow" which search engines will ignore for authority purposes

  – Client browsers can click through fine

- You now have two choices for links you create or procure, and should have different costs