



Google: the web made searchable

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ALEKS KROTOSKI:

Page and Brin devised an algorithm to calculate links between pages on the Web.

And it gave an independent mathematical value of how interesting a page was, based on the number links to it and whether those incoming links were from pages that were themselves interesting.

Page and Brin realised that what had begun as an academic project could actually be used to solve one of the biggest challenges on the web – how to find what you're looking for.

So what is the relationship between interestingness and search?

TERRY WINOGRAD:

So having figured out a way to decide which pages were interesting, to what degree, with PageRank – then it was possible to give search results that were much more useful.

So when you did a search for 'computer', say, and it would find all the pages that would say the word computer on it.

Then, the ones that it gave me at the top – at the beginning of the first page – would be the ones that have the most interestingness. Which means that they're the ones I'd be likely to really want to go look at, not the stray junk.

So that improved, to a tremendous degree, the kind of results you could give.

ALEKS KROTOSKI:

This was perhaps the most effective search engine yet. Page and Brin called it Google.

And Google benefited from the web's rapid expansion during the dotcom boom of the late 1990s, because its link-counting algorithm actually got better as more pages were added to the web.