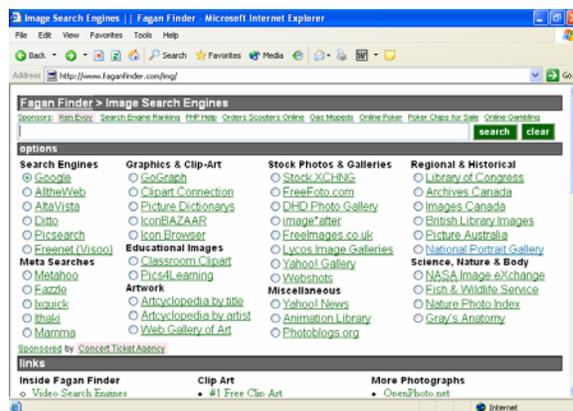


Search Engines in an Iconic Age: Using search engines to find images

By Chris Tighe

As we move into an age in which we rely less on text and more and more on graphical information, search engines must be able to find a wide range of images, from photographs, maps and illustrations to multimedia content. These search engines break down into two broad categories: regular search engines that allow you to restrict your search to image files, and specialized search engines which provide professional quality images at a price. I'll begin with sites which provide a listing of image search engines.

There is an overview at the Big Search Engine Index: Directory of Image Search Engines http://www.search-engine-index.co.uk/Images_Search/. This site gives a list of image search engines and a short explanatory paragraph for each.



Faganfinder.com

<http://www.faganfinder.com/img/> lists image search engines by categories such as stock photos, clip art, and historical. Under the directory of categories, it gives advice about contacting web owners to check copyright ownership and it gives a small overview of image file formats.

The Technical Advisory Service for Images (TASI) offers a review of image search engines, <http://www.tasi.ac.uk/resources/searchengines.html>, and an article, "Searching the Internet for Images" <http://www.tasi.ac.uk/resources/searchingresources.html>. This article gives an excellent overview and many valuable hyperlinks to other search engines.

RLG DigiNews <http://www.rlg.org/preserv/diginews/diginews5-6.html#faq> provides a background summary and a table of image search engines which gives text search features, image search features (color, B/W, file size, etc.), and tells whether features such as thumbnail, last modified date, etc. are present and whether the site will filter for adult content.

Before you begin you search, consider what type of image you are searching for (photo, map, art reproduction, multimedia files such as streaming movies, or historical prints), how you will use the image, and how often. If you are looking for a photo, do you need color or black-and-white? Be aware of the differences between .jpeg, .gif, .tiff and bitmap. The file size on your list of returned hits will give you some idea of how long an

image will take to download. Think about whether you are going to manipulate the image, how you are going to use it and whether the pixel size of a given image will be large enough for your use.

Consider cost. Photographers hold copyrights on their images and you will need to pay for the right to use them. Think about whether you will need the image for a one-time use, or whether you will be using the image over and over. Depending on your answer, you will want to check for costs associated with either “rights-managed” or “royalty-free” images. Rights-managed photographs are available for a specific purpose at a specific price and are usually more expensive and exclusive. Royalty-free images can be used again and again once you have paid for them. For a discussion of the differences between the two, see

<http://www.comstock.com/web/IHF/COLLEGE/CompareGuide/Default.htm>

One way to find images for free is to check out U.S. government web sites, although you will need to read any disclaimers and check with individual agencies regarding copyright. Government sites include www.nasa.gov, <http://www.science.gov/>, and The Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov>.

The most common search engines, Google, Altavista, AskJeeves, etc., offer an “images” option on their basic search menus. Several others such as Hotbot.com make you go to the advanced option. On Yahoo, you must go to <http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images/advanced>. From there you can specify size (large, medium or small), image type, and color. These common search engines will return thumbnails with the picture’s dimensions and file size and a link to the picture. Hitting the “Pictures” radio button on Lycos takes you to their separate multimedia search engine, <http://multimedia.lycos.com/>. This site does not have as many customized options as the others, but it was very thorough. These sites all have the advantage of being free and they are familiar to everyone.

Altavista.com’s basic image search screen <http://www.altavista.com/image/default> will allow you to select color or black-and-white pictures and to limit by size or source. On Google.com, after clicking on the basic Image tag, you must take the extra step of going to Advanced Image Search to pick your options of size, file type, color scale and domain.

To hit several search engines at once, try Ithaki, a meta search engine for images and multimedia including web cam images. It will search Google/Ubbi, Dino Cobion, Visoo, Altavista Images, Fast Picture Search/All the web, Picsearch, and Art.com simultaneously. Clicking “Internet Mega Search” will take you to a page where you can do an advanced search or search news sources including international newspapers, the BBC and CNN. <http://www.ithaki.net/images/>

Ditto.com provides a visual search of the web using pictures. Users are linked to the originating web site on which the pictures are located. Should you wish to use any picture, photo or artwork you see during the search process, you must obtain the appropriate permission from the owner of the material. According to their web site, Ditto enables people to navigate the Web through pictures. I was not happy with the results that

came back on my searches. They were frequently irrelevant or they took me to another search engine such as About.com where I had to search further to find a precise hit. You can search by topic and you can search under “images,” “web,” or “shopping.”



Picsearch <http://www.picsearch.com/> is a search engine for pictures and images. It is free to use. Their website provides search tips. A search brought back relevant hits and clicking on “info” under the thumbnails took me to a new page with information on the image (file size, image size, file format, etc.). It also provided links to the image and to the source URL where the image came from so that I could see the image by itself and also in context. Each page reminded me to contact the original URL source for copyright information. Picsearch promotes its “family friendliness” because it uses filters to block what it considers to be offensive materials. There are some advanced search options.

The premier image search engines, which index copyrighted material from professional photographers, come with a price. Almost all allow you to search, and will return thumbnails with some information (photographer, date, image size), but to use the images that you find, you must register and pay. Of course, these are high grade commercial photographs. Archival photos, illustrations, fine art, film and multimedia resources are often available through these sources.



Corbis <http://pro.corbis.com/>. The Corbis collection is made up of more than 70 million images, and includes content from the finest photographers and filmmakers, museums, cultural institutions, and public and private collections in the world. Corbis does offer Royalty-Free images with unlimited

usage for a one-time fee. Pricing for educational institutions is based on a student or community population, or concurrent users. In addition to news, historical and entertainment photos, you can search their collection of paintings and illustrations by clicking “Art”.

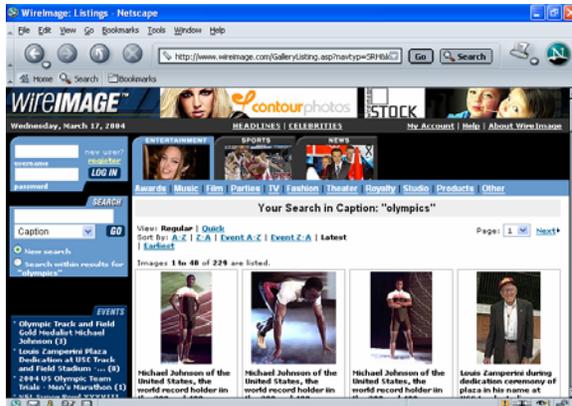


GettyImages.com

<http://www.gettyimages.com/> concentrates on images of news events, sports, celebrities, and art. It also searches film, archival images and animations. You can search photographs by keyword or concept and the site will calculate the price based on image size, placement, duration of use and geographic distribution. Clicking on a thumbnail will give you a larger image with information about the image, including any use restrictions, copyright information and the keywords used to index it. GettyImages draws from a wide variety of source, including National Geographic, The Bridgeman Art Library and Lonely Planet Images. You can even commission a photographer for a shot.

Two subsections of GettyImages are The Hutton Archives and Time/Life Photographs. The Hutton Archives <http://www.hultonarchive.com/> gives you a list of keyword categories. It claims to have 40 million archival images. You can add additional keyword terms from their list to create your searches. You can also use Boolean searching. It is free to register and you can see large versions of the images before you order them.

The Time and Life Magazines pictures are only available to commercial, corporate, editorial and publishing entities. They are not open to individual searchers. If you are searching for commercial purposes, you may register at: <http://www.timelifepictures.com/>.



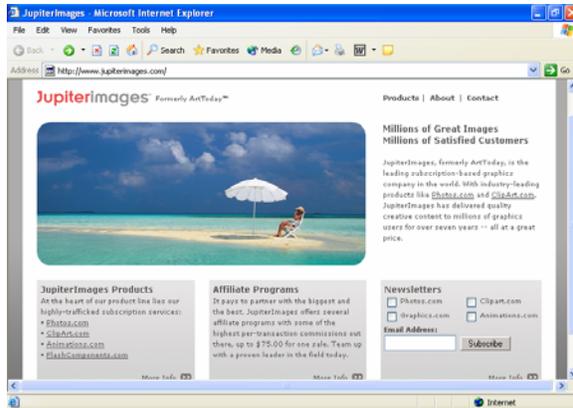
WireImage.com

(<http://www.wireimage.com>) covers headline news, sports, fashion and celebrities. WireImage has more than 610,000 images on their website and over 2 million images in their archive. You can search using the caption feature for free. The search will bring back a series of thumbnail images with captions, but to see a larger image or for details about the image, you must register. There are separate subscription packages for individuals or commercial/broadcast use. The individual subscription comes in three tiers: Basic level at \$10.00 a month for images from the last 30 days, Plus level at \$25.00 a month for images from the past year, and Research level with all images at \$75.00 a month. The commercial service subscription is available to qualified businesses only.



For animations, photo clips, presentation graphics and web graphics, backgrounds and other design elements,

<http://www.mediabuilder.com/> is a good one-stop shop. This site offers two subscription levels. The Gold level costs \$29.95 for 3 months or \$59.95 for a year and the Platinum level costs \$99.95 for a year; some sample images are free.



Jupiter Images

<http://www.jupiterimages.com/> allows you to search [Photos.com](#), [ClipArt.com](#), [Animations.com](#) and [FlashComponents.com](#). All of these are subscription sites, but they allow you to pay one flat fee by the day, week, month or year for an unlimited number of images. Photos are available in 3 sizes. There is a free download of the week on FlashComponents.com. You can preview all images.

If you work in a field that requires professional graphics but also requires conformity to copyright laws, then there will be a premier photo search engine for you whether you need current news or archival materials at a variety of prices.