

Google Beyond google

Varinder Taprial; Priya Kanwar



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Google Beyond *google*

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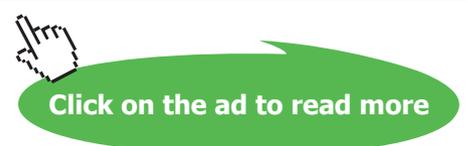


Month 16
I was a construction supervisor in the North Sea advising and helping foremen solve problems

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International opportunities
Three work placements







Introduction

Back in 1996, two students at the Stanford University, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, built a search engine for web pages that they named Backrub. Backrub used the quality and the quantity of the links pointing towards a page to decide on the importance and the relevance of that specific page. By 1998, they had formalised their work and Google was born.

Google Search turned out to be a remarkable success and even today Google Search has more than 60% of the market share. Such was the popularity and dominance of the Google Search engine that people started using google as a verb. The American Dialect Society declared it the most useful word of 2002. In 2006, the word was officially included in the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam Webster Collegiate dictionary. The verb *google* means, “*to use the Google Search Engine to obtain information on the World Wide Web*”.

The use of a brand name as a verb is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it brings glory to the brand for its success, implying acceptance of the company's product as a standard, on the other it creates trademark complications. But the most significant drawback is that it sends across the message that the company only produces or facilitates what the verb means. It happened to Xerox earlier; Xerox the company is a document management company, which does more than just making photocopiers, but the use of the brand name as a verb somehow restricts the imagination of people.

A similar situation is occurring with Google. Google has grown much bigger today. It is a multi-billion dollar company that has dozens of products and services in various languages, but for most people Google is a just a basic search engine, albeit a good one. As a result, they do not even explore the other product offerings from Google. It seems strange because most of these products are **free**.

Google itself has claimed that only five percent of the Google users use the advanced features of the Google Search. Is the basic Google Search so good that users do not need to use the advanced features? Google might flatter itself thinking so, but that is not the case. The reality is that most people are not aware of those functions. For example, did you know that if you have to divide the square of the sum of 97 and 26 by the square root of 24, you don't need to get a calculator, you just have to type “ $(97+26)^2/(\text{sqrt } 24)$ ” in the Google Search bar and the answer is displayed. There are many features like this one in the Google Search and many more power packed product offerings by Google that most people are unaware or ignorant of.

The title of the book, **Google Beyond google** recognizes this fact and the purpose of this book is to make the reader aware of and introduce the free web applications, besides the basic search, on offer from Google and how they can benefit the regular user. The applications will be introduced as separate chapters and their essential features will be discussed.

Like we said earlier, Google has dozens of products on offer and we cannot cover all of them in this book and hence some of the more common Google products like Blogger, Chrome, Gmail, Apps etc. which are better known and have their own following have been excluded from the scope of this book. We have chosen some of the less known and infrequently used products, which (according to us) will not only enhance the regular user's experience of the Internet but also empower him to exploit the web efficiently.

In this book, we have grouped the various applications of Google according to their utilization into three sections as follows:

Section I – The Web of Google Search: Beyond the basic search, which is also provided by other search engines, Google takes search deeper by integrating a lot of other functions with search.

This section starts with discussing the advanced features of Google Search and other search related Google applications like Google Maps, Google Places, Google Reader, Google Translate, Google Scholar and Google Alerts.

Section II – Moving on to the Cloud: All of us keep hearing of cloud computing and Software as a Service (SaaS). What they essentially mean is the delivery of software or computing as a service rather than as a product. The software and the related resources are centrally hosted on servers and delivered via the Internet. The concept is not entirely new and organizations have been hosting business applications centrally for a long time. However with the advent of Internet the delivery got even simpler making it accessible to more people. Inherently this model offers a host of benefits to the consumers, which include cost benefits, easier scalability, latest software updates, reduced risk of data loss, sharing and collaboration.

This section will deal with enhancing your desktop with iGoogle and cloud based office applications like Google Calendar, Google Docs, the photo sharing and editing applications like Google Picasa and Google Picnik.

Section III – Social Networking: Online social networking has become a hit with most Internet users. People use these networks extensively to stay connected with their friends and family, share photos / web pages, chat and even find people with similar interests. There are many social networking services existing already but the services are still evolving each one vying to be the best and in turn have the maximum number of users.

The latest social networking offer from Google, Google Plus will be introduced in this chapter.

So, get ready to be immersed in the world of **Google**. Discover, at your own peril, how your life is about to be completely taken over by this simple word that has become a verb and has changed the world of the Internet and your computer experience through the years. Ever so subtly, Google has invaded your lives and your computer to such an extent that soon you may become totally dependent on the various tools, applications, gadgets and software that is helping you to organise your life at home and office or business and also providing easy answers to your daily problems in so many ways. How is this happening? This is what you will learn as you proceed through the various chapters, exploring the different ways in which Google can be used to make your life easier with its various products and features that are absolutely **free** and easily available to all.

Section I: The Web of Google Search

1 Google Search

Search is where it all started and **Google Search** has dominated the market ever since its inception. At the time of writing this book, Google Search's worldwide market share is reported to be above 60%. Such prominence and high usage numbers would make one feel that the Search Engine has everything that users want (which is a fact) and that the users are optimally using all the features available (not true). According to the *Google Search Appliance documentation* published in 2009, 95% of Google Search users **do not** use the advanced features available.

Agreed that the simple search itself is good enough to lead most people to where they want to go or what they want to find, but with the **advanced search** feature and the other **special features** available in the search, one can make their search much *faster, effective and efficient*. In this chapter, you will learn about all the features available in **Google Search** and also the tips and tricks to make your Google Search experience better.

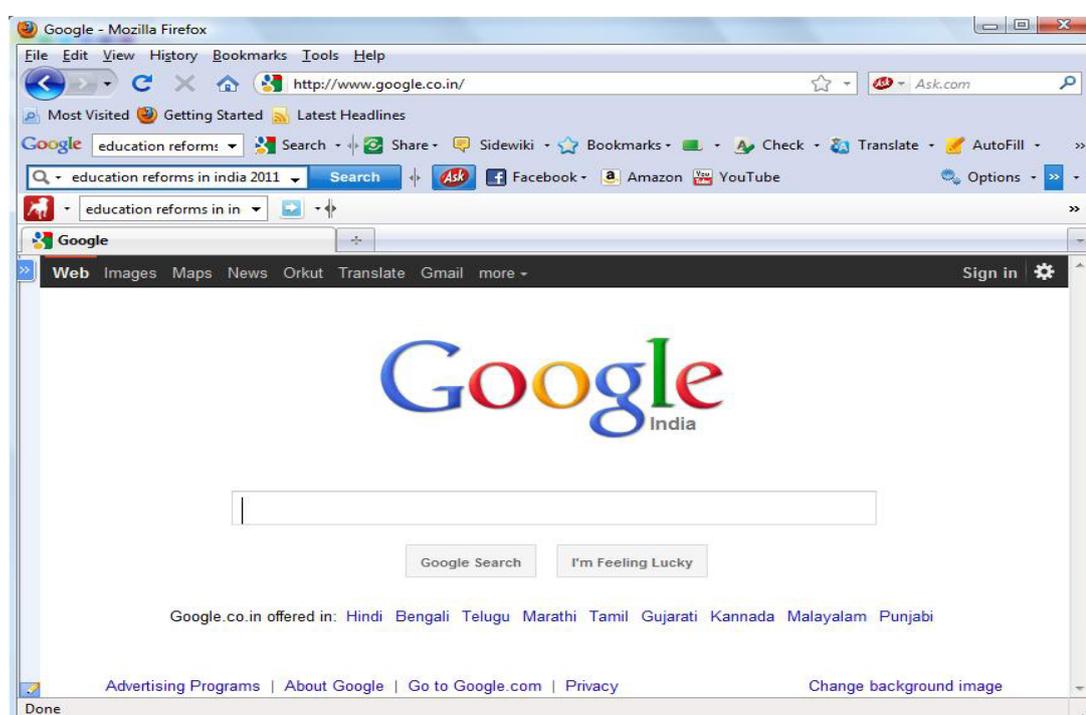


Figure1.1 Google Search Home Page

The Google Search user interface is as simplistic as it could get. Since Google is available worldwide, in order to enhance the user experience, they have customised the search to cater for various regions/countries. This way, the search delivers results that are most relevant to the user based on his location.

Google has created country specific pages for almost all countries/regions, like *google.it* for Italy and *google.ru* for Russia. Therefore, if you find yourself landing on a country specific Google homepage like *www.google.co.in* instead of *www.google.com*, do not sweat. There is a link available at the bottom of the page that says, “**Go to google.com**”. However, if you'd still prefer to use only *google.com*, then all you need to do is just bookmark the link *http://www.google.com/ncr*, as this link will always take you to the *google.com* page, irrespective of your location.

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Since more than 60% of Internet users are already using Google Search we will not discuss much about the standard search and how it works, but head straight to all the *other* things that you can do beyond the standard search.

1.1 Customise Your Google Home Page

The **Google Search Home Page** can be customised to suit your requirements, moods and senses. The home page was designed to keep the page clean, simple and fast to load with the **Search bar tool** being the only prominent feature on the page.

However, if you find the look too bland for your taste and would like to spice up the page with a little colour, you do have the option of changing the background. On the Home page a link, “**Change background image**” is available on the left bottom corner. You need to be signed in to use this feature so that Google can remember your preferences. A Background Selection Window, as shown in the Figure 1.2 enables you to select the image of your liking.

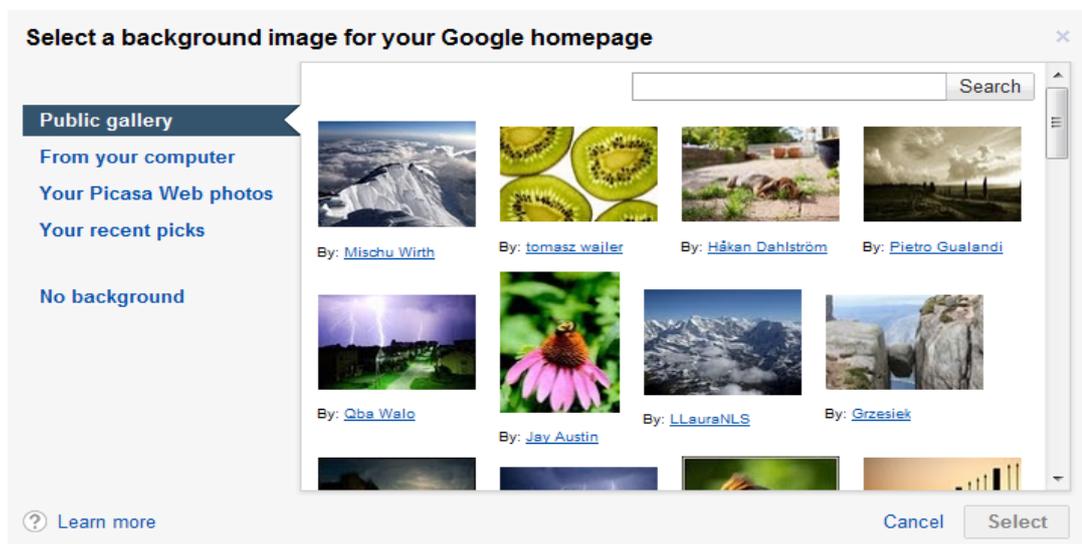


Figure 1.2 Background Selection Window

You have the option to select any image from the **Public Gallery**, **from your Computer**, or **from your Picasa Web Photos**. You can change the background of your Google Home Page to suit your moods, taste or season anytime you want, or even revert back to the ‘**No background**’ home page. Given below is a picture of the Google home page with a background we selected randomly to give you an idea of how colourful it could look by just adding an image.



Figure1.3 Google Home Page with a Background Image

However, please note that your customised Google home page along with the background image will be visible to you only when you **sign in** to your account. Therefore, once you have signed out of your Google account, you will once again see only the bare page.

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1.2 Make search more effective using Search Options

Most people have already used the basic **Google Search** sometime or the other. It is what **more** you can do with the search that we want to discuss. There are various options you can use to refine the search to get better results.

By default, the Google Search is set to search all over the web for the query entered in the search box. In figure 1.3 above you can see that the link “**Web**” is highlighted in the top bar. This means that the Search results will comprise everything from the *web*, irrespective of the type of content, be it a news item, a blog, a social networking update, a press release or anything else for that matter.

To give you an example of how it works, we will search for the terms “**Keira Knightley**”. We get the results as shown in the screenshot below. (Figure 1.4)

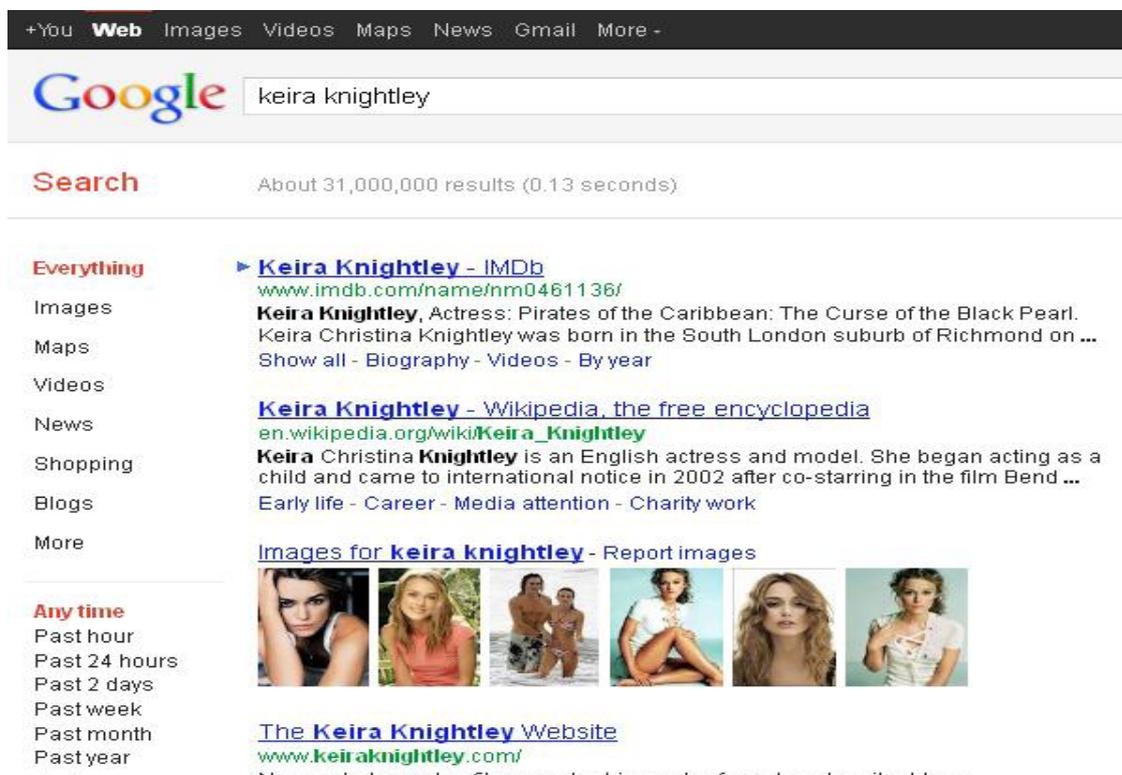


Figure1.4 Search Results Page

As you can see in figure 1.4, a navigation bar appears on the left hand side of the page with the following tabs: *Everything*, *Images*, *Videos*, *News*, *Blogs* and *More*; with the tab “**Everything**” highlighted in red.

This means that the search result for your query contains all kinds of content (images, news, videos, blogs etc) available online. Now, you can further narrow down your search results as per your requirement by using the appropriate filters provided in the form of the tabs mentioned above. For example, if you are searching for something specific, like maybe only the latest news items about “**Keira Knightley**”, then all you need to do is click on the “*News*” tab to get all the latest news from all over the web, which can be further sorted out according to the time frame as, **Anytime, Past hour, Past 24 hours, Past week or month** etc. You can also choose if you want to search pages from the whole web or pages only from your country (only if you are on a country specific home page.)

Similarly, one can search through “*Images*”, “*Videos*” or “*Blogs*” by using the tabs provided on the left side bar. There are a number of filters available and if you click on the “**More**” tab you get to see additional filters like: *shopping, books, places, discussions* and *patents*, as shown in figure 1.5 below. You can also choose any of these options to filter the search results. Please remember that there are even more options available and what you see is just what the search engine considers relevant to the topic you are searching for. We will now discuss all the options available to us to filter our results.

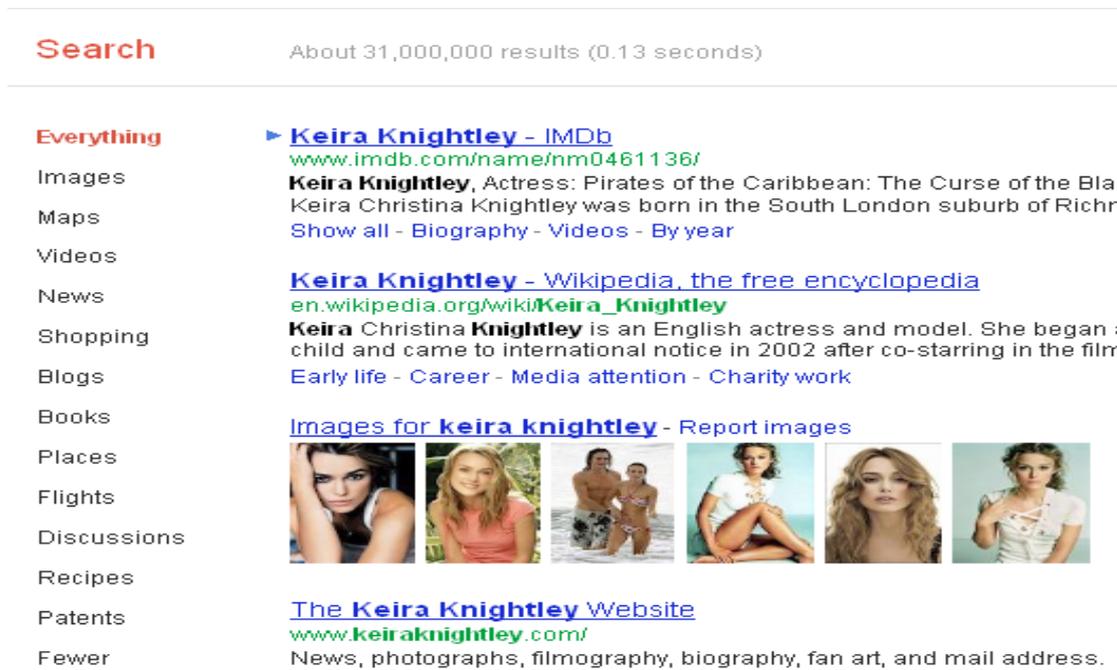


Figure 1.5 Results page Showing “More” Options in the Left Navigation Panel

- **Everything:** Your Google Search will show you unfiltered results, by default, which will show all kinds of content, as explained above.
- **Images:** If you select the **Images** filter, you will get results for images based on your search query. Most users are aware that they can search for images by typing in words or phrases in the search bar. However, it is also possible to search for images using an Image URL or by uploading an image. When you are looking for images you can either filter the results after searching everything or you can directly go to the **Image Search** by clicking on the *Images* tab on the top bar of the Google home page. Either ways you will see a camera icon in the search bar on the right side as shown in the figure 1.6 below.

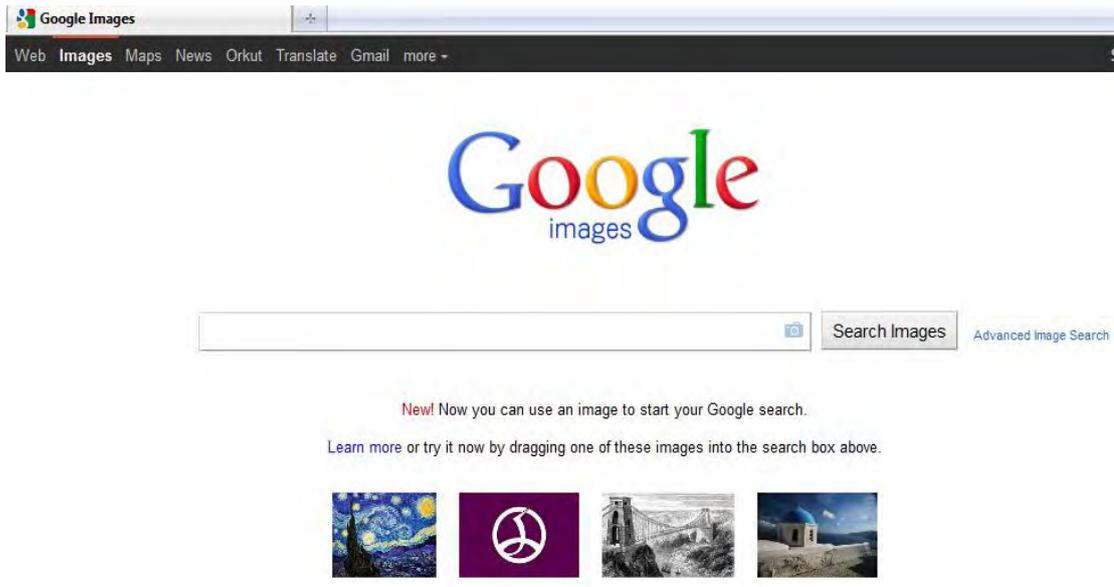


Figure 1.6 Google Images

You can search for a particular image by using the camera icon, in the search bar, which will open a new window as shown in the figure 1.7 below.

“I studied English for 16 years but...
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons”
Jane, Chinese architect

ENGLISH OUT THERE

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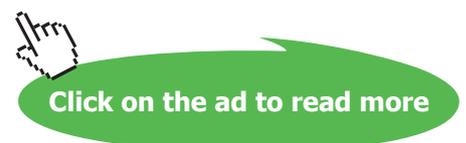




Figure 1.7 Search by Image Tool Bar

Here, in the box provided, you can either enter the URL of the image you want to search for or you can click on the **Upload an image** link, which will open a dialog box for you to select an image from your computer. You can also drag and drop the image into the search box; however, all browsers may not support this feature.

- **News:** If you select this filter you will see results from Google news only. This does not mean that Google is running a news agency. Google aggregates news from various sources and presents them to the user. Thus, in our example, you will see all the news items chronologically presented, about Keira Knightley. An interesting feature about the Google news is that you can *create alerts* (covered in chapter 3, Google Alerts) for your search topic. If you create an alert, Google will notify you (by email) about any fresh content about your search expression, as it is found in real time.
- **Books:** This filter will give you the results for books on your search expression. So if you are looking for recipes, you will get a list of books with *Recipes* as the theme. You will also be able to preview the book and see any reviews, which are there. In addition, if the information is available, you will be able to see the vendors/stores that are selling the book.
- **Videos:** If you would like to see only videos on the topic you are interested in, then you can use the *Video* filter. Again the videos that are displayed as search results could be Google videos or from any other website.
- **Blogs:** The *Blogs* filter focuses on blog search. If you want to see what people are saying about a specific topic you are interested in, then *blogs* filter is the right choice as it is generally individuals who maintain blogs. Even though the blog search includes results in all languages (by default), you can use the *advanced search* feature to restrict the results to a language of your choice.
- **Places:** By using this filter you can restrict the search results to only those from Google places (covered in Chapter 5). Remember that only those places, which are listed or are important enough, will be presented. So, if you type in your name and expect your address to be shown, it won't happen.
- **Shopping:** The shopping filter shows results from the Google product search. It helps you find online stores containing your query product and also compares the products and their prices.
- **Discussions:** The Discussion filter provides results from Groups, Forums and Question & Answers sites.

1.2.1 Customise Search by Location

Google customises the search results depending on your location and the automatically detected location is clearly indicated on the left hand side bar of the search results under the search filters. See figure 1.8(a).

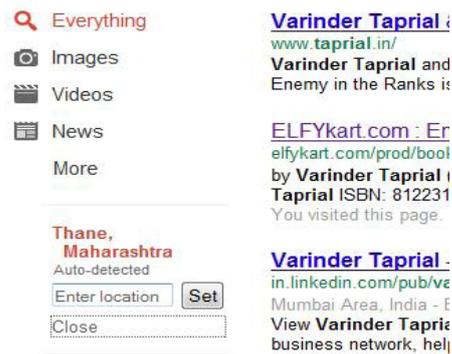


Figure1.8(a) Search by Location

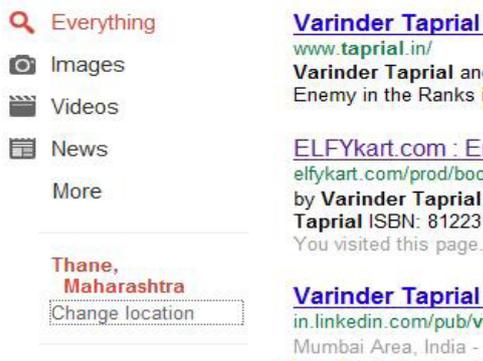


Figure 1.8(b) Change Location Setting

Google automatically detects your location based on the IP address of your computer. However, if the auto-detected location shown is wrong or you wish to change it, for some reason, then use the ‘**Change Location**’ link under the auto-detected location and enter your desired location to **set** it. See figure 1.8 (b)

1.2.2 Pages from “Country”

As mentioned earlier, Google displays search results from the entire web by default, but if you want you can click on the option ‘Pages from *Country*’ to get only results only from your own country. This feature will be available only if you are on a country specific Google home page and not when you are on www.google.com.

1.2.3 More Search Tools

Google provides for more search options under the Tab ‘*More Search Tools*’ on the left hand side bar. The search tools available are as shown in the figure 1.9 below.

The web

Pages from India

Any time

- Past hour
- Past 24 hours
- Past week
- Past month
- Past year
- Custom range...

All results

- Sites with images
- Timeline
- Dictionary
- Reading level
- Translated foreign pages

Fewer search tools

Figure 1.9 More Search Tools

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- **Date of Publishing:** By default, the search results are based on many factors like relevance and popularity and are not dependent on the date of publishing and hence you see the text ‘*Any time*’ highlighted. You can choose to be shown only results published within the time frame you specify, like past hour, past 24 hours etc. or define your own custom range.
- **Sites with Images:** This helps you distinguish between pages about ambiguous words and ensures that the sites listed will also have some images. For example, the word *keyboard*, it could be a computer keyboard or a musical keyboard.
- **Timeline:** If you want the results on a subject according to the time period then *Timeline* facilitates that. It is especially useful if you are carrying out research on some subject. When you select the option *Timeline*, you get a Timeline chart with various sections displayed, on top of the results page, as shown in figure 1.10 below. You can select a section to specify the period for which you want the results.

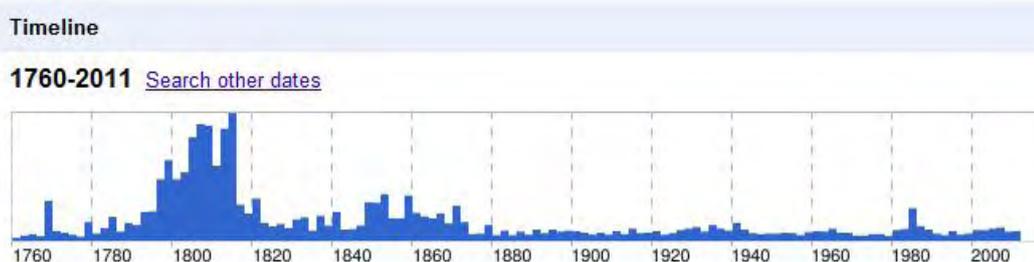


Figure1.10 Timeline

- **Dictionary:** If you want the definition for your search term, you can choose the option *Dictionary*. This option will also give you results regarding synonyms, usage etc.
- **Reading Level:** Depending on your purpose or your age/comfort with the language, you can select the *Reading level* from three choices **Basic**, **Intermediate** and **Advanced**. Google Search results will be displayed as per your selection. As always the default setting is all levels. If you have filtered results by specifying a Reading Level, you can switch back to all results anytime without leaving the page.
- **Translated Foreign Pages:** It is possible that you do not get the desired level of results in the language of your choice. For example, if you are looking for information on a remote Russian village, chances are that the best information will be available online in Russian language. In such cases, you can use the option of *Translated Foreign Pages*. Google will look for pages in the relevant language and then present you with the translated results.

1.2.4 Something Different

For some search queries, Google offers you to try “something different” by providing suggestions about keywords that may be directly or indirectly related to your query. This is really helpful when the precise terms you want to use are eluding you. So if you are searching for Wind Instruments, Google helpfully suggests words like Clarinets, flutes, trombones, violins and oboes. See figure 1.11. This is different from the *Related Searches* offered at the bottom of the result page that are actually suggested to help you focus or be more specific in the query.

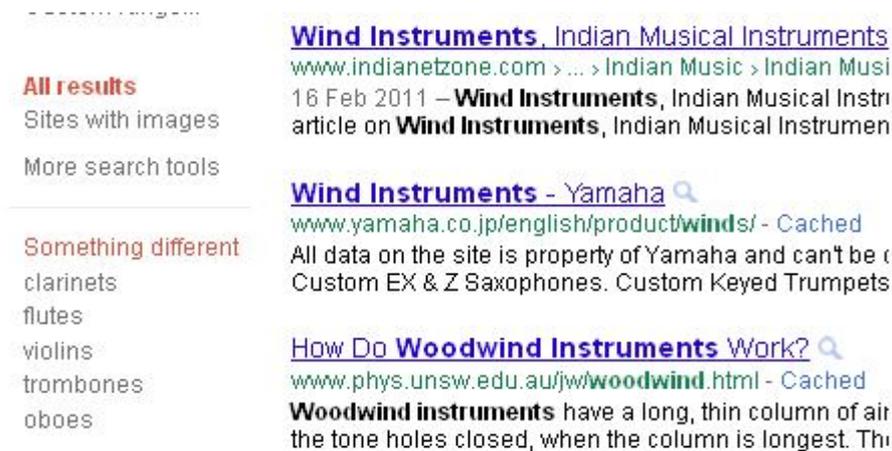


Figure 1.11 Something Different

1.2.5 Cached Pages

There may be times when a page does not open due to overload or the web server being down. In this case, you can click on the *Cached* link next to the search result. Google will then open the last stored version of the page.

1.3 The Advanced Search

On the search results page, the search bar appears on the top of the page, so that you can modify your search without going back to the Google home page. Next to the search bar you will find a link for the **advanced search**. The advanced search gives you the option to apply filters as discussed above and some more options. According to Google, less than 5% of people use the advanced search features since, they claim, the basic search is good enough for normal users. However, one need not actually go to the advanced search page as all the features of the advanced search can actually be used from the basic search page itself by using the following tips and tricks:

- **Phrase Search:** If you are looking for results to a specific phrase or certain words used in the exact combination as you have specified, you need to enclose the expression in double quotes “ ”. For example the query, “*Best hotel in London*” will get you pages / websites which have the exact term as specified. Without the quotes, you may get generic results about hotels in London and tourism in London.
- **Search exactly as is:** The basic Google search will automatically apply synonyms to certain search words and at times even correct the spelling if it thinks that you have made a mistake. So if you are looking for an exact word in your search, add a “+” sign before the word and Google will exclude all results with synonyms.
- **Exclude a Word:** If you are looking for information on *Himachal Pradesh*, you will find that the result pages are filled with tourism related sites. If you are not interested in tourism, you can exclude the word by specifying it with a “-” sign. The search expression then reads as *Himachal Pradesh -Tourism*. Google search will now exclude all results related to tourism.

- **The OR Operator:** Generally, Google will consider all the words in the search expression and present relevant results accordingly. However, if you have some confusion about words or years you can specify the same in the search expression by using the **OR** operator. For example, if you are looking for details of *Tourism* and *Travels* in *Himachal Pradesh* but do not want both the terms to be mixed up, you can enter the search expression *Himachal Pradesh Tourism OR Travels*. This will give you results with only one of the two options. Remember that the **OR** operator has to be in upper case and if you like you can use the symbol ‘|’ in lieu.
- **The Wildcard Operator:** If there is a term or fact which you are not sure of you can use the wildcard operator “ * ” for Google to try and guess the word for you. For example, the query *Black * Recipes* will give you results of Black beans recipes, Black Forest recipes and Black Truffle recipes.
- **Search Within A Site:** Suppose you had read an article about iPhones on the BBC site and wish to go through it again, then you can specifically indicate to Google Search that it should look into the BBC website only by using the expression *iphones site:bbc.co.uk*. Similarly, you can specify the class of sites like .gov or .org in your search query like *iphones site:.gov* which will produce results only from the .gov domain.
- **Search Word in URL/Title:** If you want only pages which have a particular word in the URL, you can use the query *inurl:* For example, the query *inurl:cricket* will return only pages that have the word cricket in the URL of the page. Similarly, you can use the expression *intitle:* for getting pages that have the specific word in the title of the page. Remember that only the word immediately succeeding the *inurl:* or *intitle:* expression will be considered and any other words will be matched anywhere on the pages. If you want all the words to appear in the URL or Title then you can use the expressions *allinurl:* or *allintitle:*

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1.4 Google Search Special Features

In addition to the basic and advanced search, Google has many special features to make life easier for you. Again, by using certain trigger words, these features can be used from within the basic search tool bar in the home page as indicated below.

- **Weather:** The word *weather* followed by a city name will return weather for that particular city. Example *weather Mumbai*
- **Time:** *Time* followed by a city name will give you the current time at that city.
- **Stock Quote:** *Stock* followed by the company name or the ticker symbol will give you the latest market data for the company.
- **Sunrise and Sunset Time:** *Sunrise* or *Sunset* followed by the city name will return the sunrise or sunset time in the indicated city.
- **Calculator:** Next time you need an answer to a mathematical calculation you do not have to open the calculator application in your computer, just type in the query in the Google search box and it will provide you the answer. Example: $(97+26)^2/(\text{sqrt } 24)$.
- **Unit Conversion:** Conversion into different units is simple with Google search. Type in the desired conversion in the search box and you get the answer. For example, *27.8 inches in mm*.
- **Currency Conversion:** Enter the conversion you want done directly into the search box and you get the result. For example *45 USD to INR*
- **Dictionary Definitions:** If you are looking for the dictionary definitions of a word just precede the word with *define*. For example *define periodical*.

There are other special features like sports scores, movie showtimes, public data, and travel data that are currently fully functional for the United States only but are expected to be available for other countries in the future.

1.5 Google Scholar

Google Scholar is a freely accessible web search for scholarly literature. It helps one to find relevant work in research from across the world. The material available and indexed includes articles, thesis, books, abstracts from various sources. It helps researchers locate the full documents through the web or a library. (Covered in Chapter 7).

Google Scholar is available at <http://scholar.google.com>

1.6 Google Desktop

Now that we are on search, did you know that you could use the Google search for your computer also? Yes, the application is called **Google Desktop** and like most things Google, it is free, simple to install, and use.

With Google Desktop, you can search your computer for files as easily as you search for information on the web with Google search. Google Desktop provides full text search for documents, images, music, chats, email etc. When you install Google Desktop it indexes all your files including the mail and the web pages that you view. It also creates cached copies of your files and stores them on the hard disk so that if you accidentally delete any file you can still retrieve the contents instead of working on it all over again.

You can download and install Google Desktop at <http://desktop.google.com> The Desktop is available for Windows, Mac as well as Linux.

The Linux and Windows versions of the Desktop come with a sidebar. The sidebar comes with some pre-installed Gadgets and resides on one side of the desktop.

2 Google Reader

Some people have the habit of catching up with the daily news or current affairs, sports news, the latest stock market trends updates etc. via specific websites that they usually bookmark as their favourite sites. Similarly, there may be certain blogs, videos or even other business related websites that you may like to follow on a daily basis and would like to be updated whenever there is any fresh content posted. This is where **Google Reader** comes in handy. Google Reader presents a remarkably simple way to subscribe to feeds from your favourite websites and blogs you want to follow. Google defines Reader as, “*tool for gathering, reading, and sharing all the interesting blogs and websites you read on the web.*”

2.1 About Google Reader

In order to understand how the Google Reader works, you need to know what a “**feed**” is and how it works. A web *feed* is a method of providing users with frequently updated content. Suppose your favourite news website is CNN.com. Now, for checking the news you will always have to go to the website, which may not be a problem. However, if you are following many such websites then you have to visit all the sites individually to check for new content. “**Feeds**” help you to resolve this issue and instead of you visiting the websites again and again, the website syndicates its content, thereby allowing you to *subscribe* to it.

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What if you could build your future and create the future?

One generation's transformation is the next's status quo. In the near future, people may soon think it's strange that devices ever had to be "plugged in." To obtain that status, there needs to be "The Shift".



On the user end, an aggregator like the **Google Reader**, aggregates all the feeds, i.e. checks for new content on all the subscribed websites and downloads the fresh content. It may be entire content or just the title along with a snippet of the article. The two prominent formats available for feeds are *RSS* and *Atom*. **RSS Feeds** are generally identified with the symbol  and **Atom Feeds** use the word *Atom*. A major advantage of feeds is that you do not have to give your username or email id to the website you are following. Also, you do not have to *unsubscribe* from a website, just deleting the feed from your reader stops any annoying content.

The Reader access tab is available under “*more*” on the top bar of the Google homepage. As mentioned above, you can use your standard Google username and password to sign in to Reader. When you sign in for the first time you get the screen as shown in the figure 2.1 below.

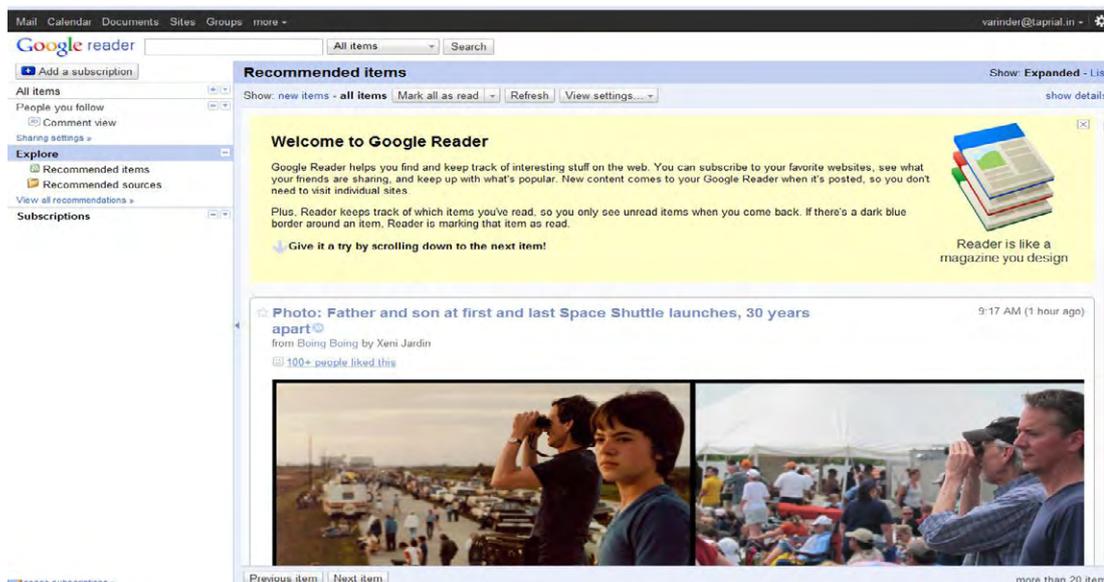


Figure 2.1 Screenshot of Google Reader Home Page

You have the option for seeing the contents of the page in the *Expanded* or *List form*. You can toggle between the two anytime you like. To begin with, the Google Reader shows you the *Recommended items*, but once you start adding feeds of your own, the default view will show your feeds instead.

2.2 Browse for Stuff

If you don't know where to start there are *bundles* in various categories like news and sports etc available for subscription, just like you take magazine or newspaper subscriptions. You can browse through these bundles by clicking on the + sign next to “**All items**” (circled in yellow) in the left navigation menu and then clicking on “**Browse for stuff**” (circled in red) as shown in the Figures 2.2 (a) & (b) below.

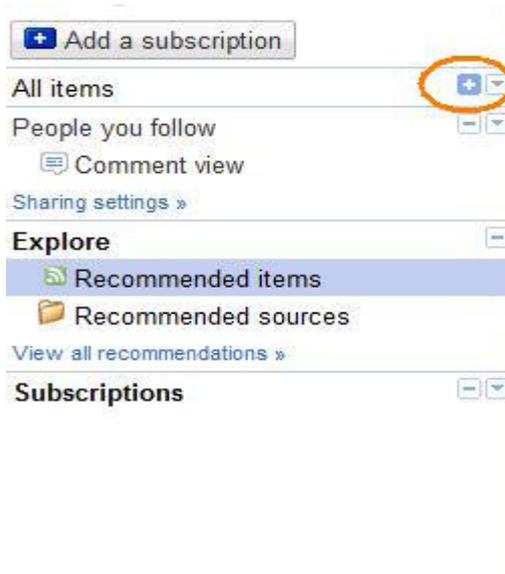


Figure 2.2 (a) Left Nav Bar in Google Reader Home Page



Figure 2.2(b) Browse for Stuff

If you choose to **Browse for stuff**, the various bundles available are displayed as shown in figure 2.3 below.

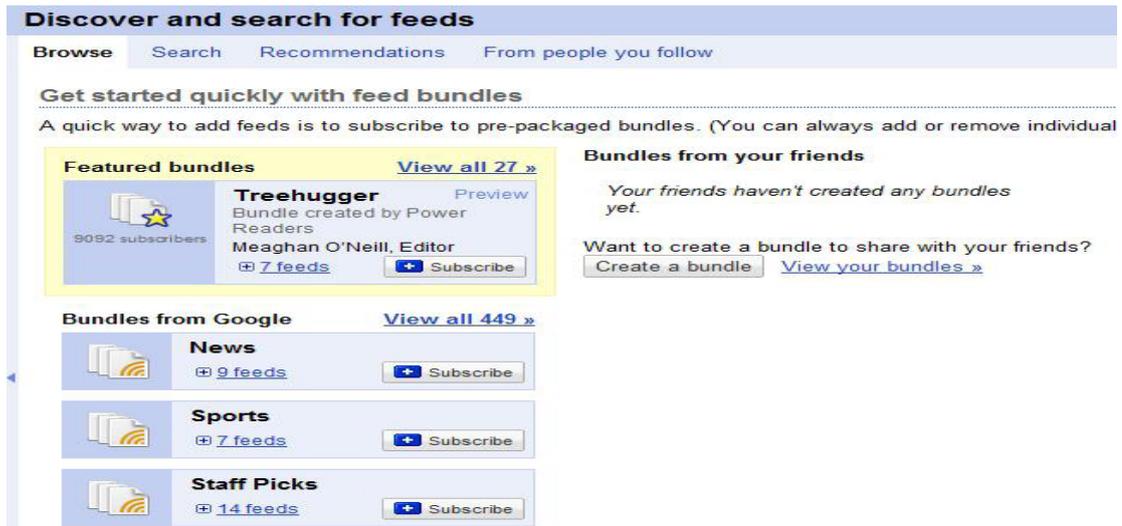
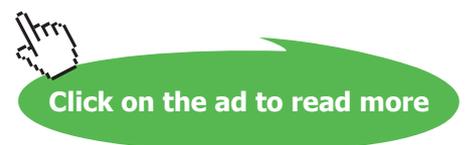


Figure 2.3 Discover and Search for Feeds

When you *subscribe* to a bundle, you will automatically start getting all the feeds, which are part of the bundle. For example, the *News* bundle will get you the news feed from nine (at this time) News websites. You can also *search* for feeds based on keywords as well as by checking out the feeds *from people you follow*.

The **Explore** tab (figure2.2a) in the left navigation bar contains the recommended items and sources. This starts working as you use the Google Reader and the automated process recommends feeds for you based on your interests.

The advertisement for Maastricht University features the university logo and the slogan 'Leading in Learning!'. The main headline reads 'Join the best at the Maastricht University School of Business and Economics!'. It lists 'Top master's programmes' with several rankings from the Financial Times and Elsevier. A circular badge states 'Maastricht University is the best specialist university in the Netherlands (Elsevier)'. The event details are 'Master's Open Day: 22 February 2014' and the website 'www.mastersopenday.nl' is provided at the bottom.



2.3 Adding a Feed

If you already have a list of regular websites or blogs that you follow on a daily basis or want to keep yourself updated on their content and activities, then you can straightaway get down to adding your own subscriptions to the Google Reader. Doing this is very simple. The “**Add a subscription**” button at the top of the left navigation bar opens the form where you can enter the web address of the website or blog you wish to subscribe to.

Since most websites and blogs have auto-discovery feature for feeds, entering the URL of the home page of the website generally gets the feed. However, if the auto-discovery feature is not available, then you have to get the *feed URL* from the website and enter it in the box. You can find the *feed URL* by clicking on the RSS  or Atom symbol on the website. The URL of the page, which opens after you have clicked on RSS or Atom symbol, is the feed URL.

For example, if we want to add the feed of the blog “Reading café” at *www.priyakanwar.com*, we would enter the URL as above into the box and the auto-discovery feature will automatically enable subscription to the blog. However, if nothing happens then we go to the website and look for the feed button. In this case, we find a link *Subscribe to: Posts (Atom)* towards the bottom of the page. We right click on the link, click on the *Copy Link location* and the URL *http://www.priyakanwar.com/feeds/posts/default* gets copied. Now we paste this URL in the box **Add a subscription** instead of the main URL. Google Reader now shows the feed from the blog as seen in figure 2.4 below.

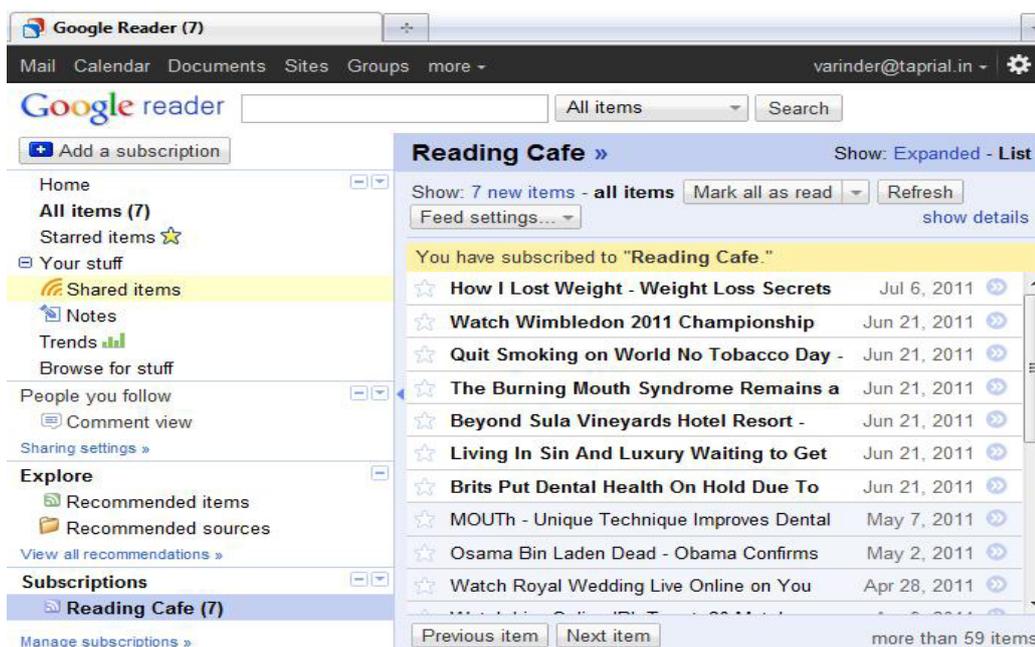


Figure 2.4 Blog Feed in Google Reader

The feed shown in the figure is in the *list view* and you can expand individual items by clicking on the items. At the end of each item you have links to **share**, **email** or **tag** those items, in case you want to share with your friends, family or colleagues. If you are sharing an item and want to add your own comments or opinion you can use the option **Share with note**.

Deleting the subscription to any website or blog is simple and can be managed from the link **Manage Subscription** at the bottom of the left navigation. On the same page, you can also organize your feeds in separate folders for ease of access.

Using feeds is the easiest way to keep track of multiple websites that you may be interested in, specifically the ones which are updated too frequently or even those like blogs of your near and dear ones who publish stuff only when they feel like and are offended if you do not notice their new post without them having to tell you. As an aggregator, Google Reader is certainly one of the best and free. Try it.

3 Google Alerts

In the preceding chapters, we have seen how we can find information using the Google Search or keep ourselves updated with information and new content using the Google Reader. But there are times when a person may want to be informed or “*alerted*” about real time developments around the world with regards to a specific topic. It may be something as simple as monitoring a “developing news story” or getting the latest content on a specific celebrity, politician, medical issues or even keeping tabs on your competitor or industry etc. Or, maybe you would like to know what the world is saying about you, your product or your company. **Google Alerts** takes care of this requirement for you.

For example, if we wanted to know when and where our blog, Reading Café, is being mentioned on the web, maybe as news, in articles or in other blogs etc. then we would like Google to “alert” us to this information as soon as possible. For this, we would have to first “*create an alert*” with the appropriate keywords so that Google can keep a lookout for those search terms appearing anywhere on the web and then send these alerts to us via e-mails. In this manner, one can be alerted to any new mentions with regard to the specific topic or keyword on the web.

3.1 Creating an Alert

Google Alerts is available at <http://www.google.com/alerts> or alternatively you can visit the Google home page and click on “*more*” from the top navigation and then click on “*even more*”. The top product under Search on the *More Google Products* page is **Alerts**. The **Google Alerts homepage** is shown in figure 3.1 below.



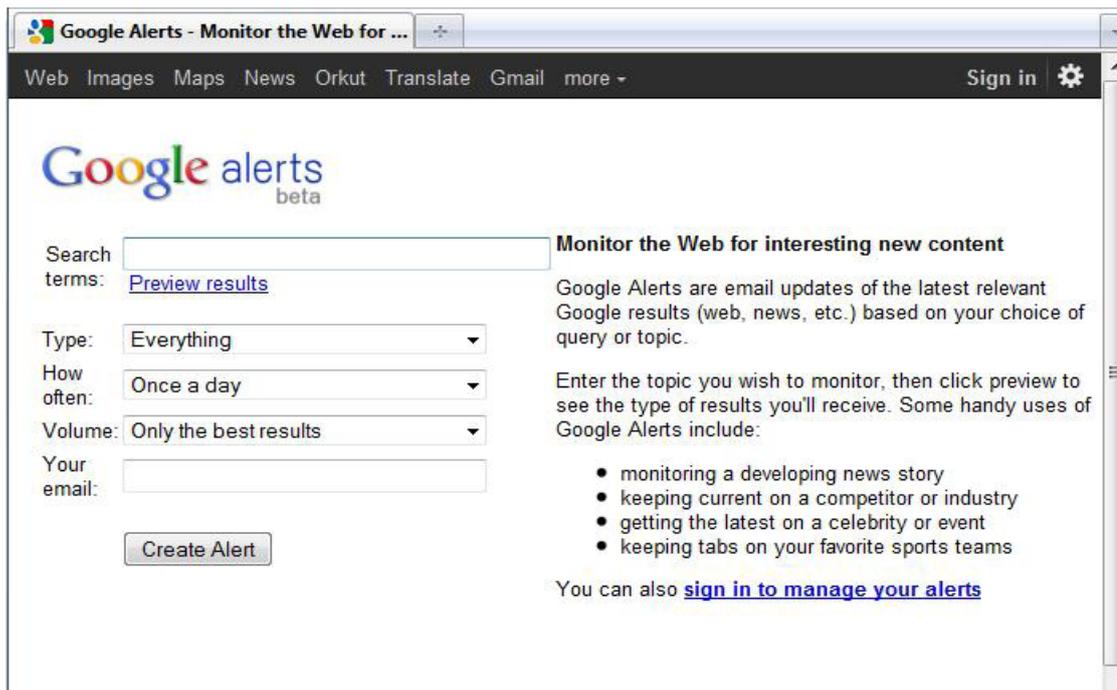


Figure 3.1 Google Alerts Home Page

The Google Alerts query form is pretty simple to fill. Fill in the search terms in the first box; the search terms are basically your query or keywords that you want to monitor content about. The keywords would be similar to what you would otherwise use for searching the web.

You can also select the *type of content* you want to monitor from the available options, i.e. *Everything* (default), *News*, *Blogs*, *Real-time*, *Videos* and *Discussions*. The frequency for receiving the alerts can be specified as per your requirement. It could be either, *Once a day* (default), *As it happens* or *Once a week*.

Select the *volume of content* you want to be notified about as *All results* or *Best results*. The choice will depend on the topic that your trying to follow, if you query is generic or something very common, expect to find many results everyday and you might like to restrict the alerts to *best results* only. However, if the query is something uncommon, like your own name provided you are not famous, you can choose *all results*.

An email id needs to be provided before you can **create the alert**. If you are already logged in, your alert will be created immediately without any verification. However, if you are not logged in then a verification email will be sent to the email address specified and your alert will be created only after you have verified the alert by clicking on the *verify* link in the email. This is done to prevent spam and creation of junk alerts by automated means. Once you have verified the alert, your alert becomes active and you will receive an email as and when Google finds something new about your query or as per the frequency you may have specified in the form.

A user can have up to 1000 Alerts at any given time.

When you are signed in, the **Google Alerts homepage** looks like the figure 3.2 below.

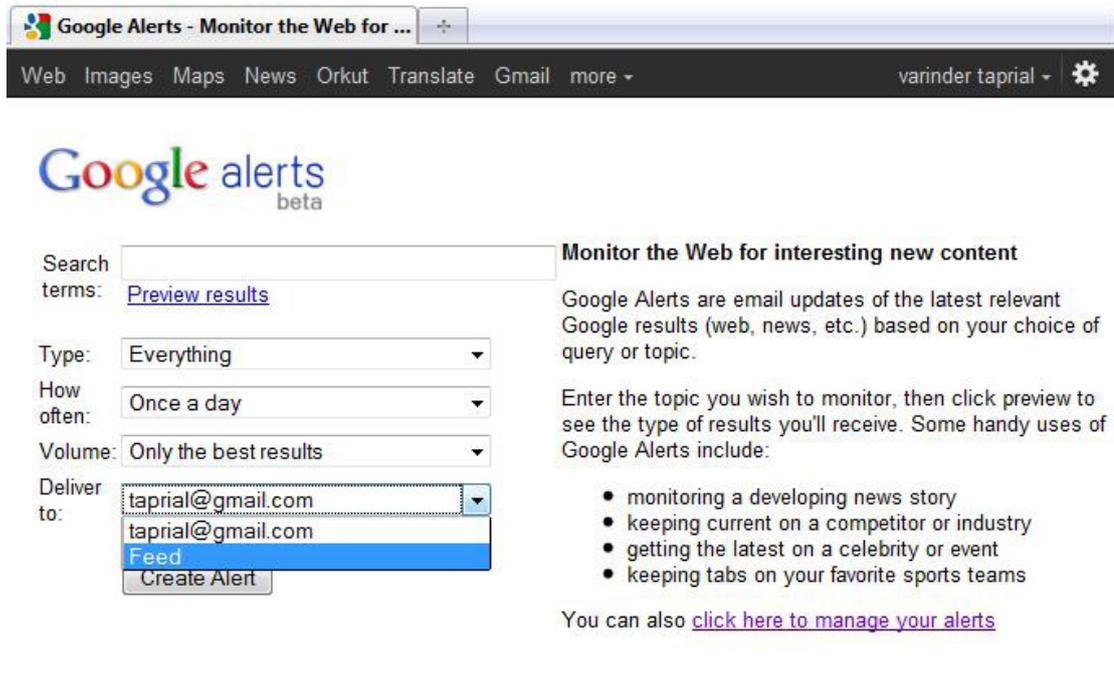


Figure 3.2 Google Alerts Home Page as Seen when Signed In

You can see here that it is the same form as you had seen earlier. The only difference is that the last box *Your Email* has been replaced by a *Deliver to* and the options available include your email id and feed. If you choose feed, the feed can be read by any RSS feed reader or Google’s very own Google Reader. Rest of the process remains the same. You can manage your alerts easily anytime by visiting Google Alerts home page. The link “**Click here to manage your alerts**” displays all the alerts created by you as shown in figure 3.3 below.

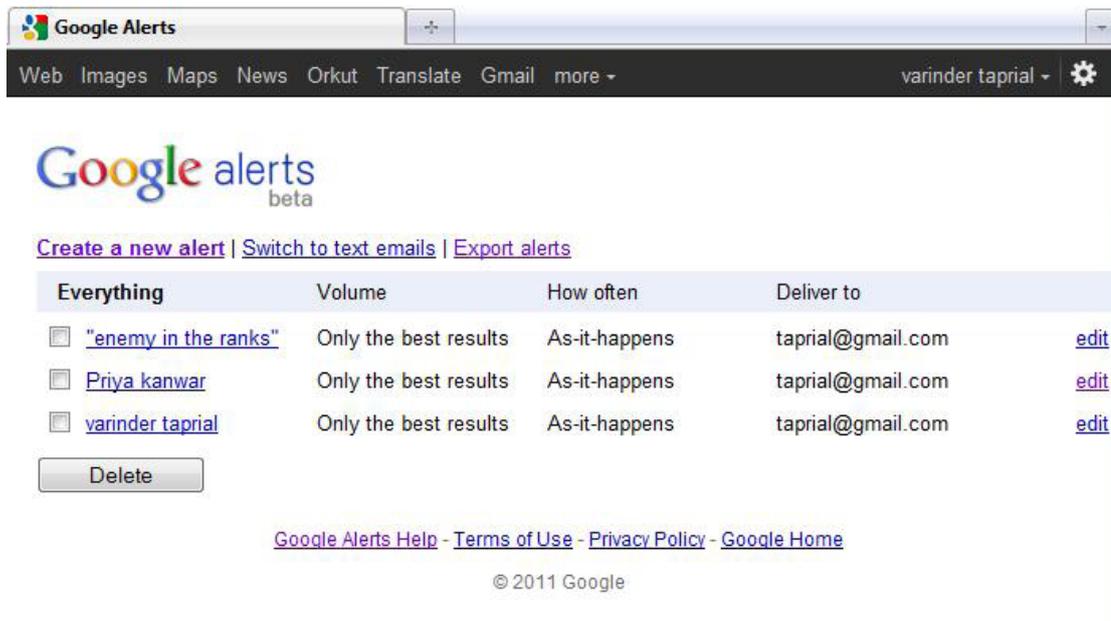


Figure 3.3 Manage Your Alerts

On this page you can manage your existing alerts i.e. edit the alert or maybe delete it when you no longer need it. The delete option is also available at the end of each email you receive regarding the alert. You can also **create a new alert** from this page itself.

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Google Alerts gives you the option to switch between HTML emails and text emails except in the case of *video alerts*, which require you to receive emails in the HTML format. You can also export your alerts in a csv format for later use, or for setting up the same alerts under a different account.

Use **Google Alerts** and never miss an update about your favourite topic.

4 Google Maps

There are innumerable occasions in our lives when we need to refer to maps. It may be to get directions to a particular place, find the best possible route by road / public transport / flight or maybe to locate certain hotels / businesses / schools close to your residence or someplace where you may be thinking of going on a holiday / business trip / relocating. Whatever the reason may be, a detailed map is always handy. There is a lot of information that can be obtained from maps and this is where the **Google Maps** will prove to be a boon to you.

4.1 About Google Maps

Google Maps is a free browser-based web mapping service provided by Google with many powerful and user-friendly features. It not only shows you the basic geographical map of an area, it also provides local business information, contact information, driving directions, route planner and satellite imagery of the area. For some cities, the *Transit* service is also available wherein the public transportation routes are shown.

Google Maps also integrates **Google Places** which is a free listing directory service provided by Google. Businesses can list their details like address, business hours, telephone numbers etc. in addition to pinpointing their location on Google Maps. Google Places is discussed in Chapter 5.

A link to Google Maps i.e. **Maps** is available on the top navigation of your Google homepage. You can also directly reach the page at <http://maps.google.com>.

If you want to use the Google Maps for a general purpose, that is, to search for directions, or locate places, business or routes etc, you are not required to sign in to your account. You can use the features and access maps of all kinds and places all over the world, similar to Google Search page, with absolute ease right from the home page of Google Maps. However, if you want to create your own maps, share places with others, or save certain maps for reference later, you will need to sign in to your account.

When you open Google Maps for the first time the Maps will display your country in a panned out view. You can either use the zoom controls to zoom in to the desired location or you just enter the city / town you want to look for in the search bar above the map. For example, when we enter “Mumbai”, we get the map of Mumbai as shown in figure 4.1 below.

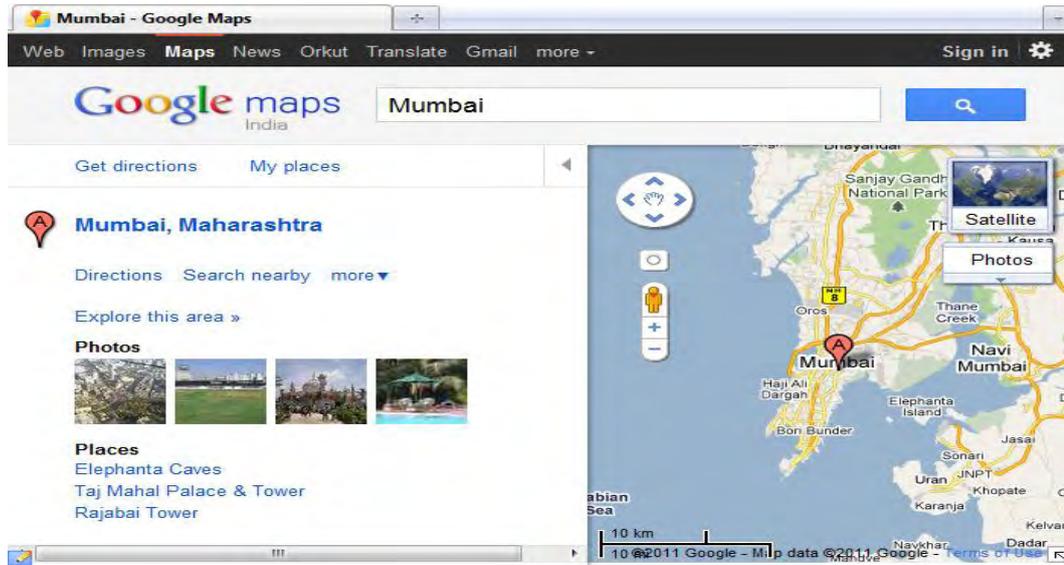


Figure 4.1 Screenshot of Google Maps

In the figure 4.1, we can see the search bar at the top of the page where we have entered our query (Mumbai), and the result of this query is clearly indicated with a Red Marker marked “A” on the map.

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The Maps page is divided into two panels, the **left panel** and the **right panel**. The left panel is the area for showing you the search results along with all the relevant information related to it, and the right panel shows you the location of your search results marked with appropriate markers on the map.

In this case, Mumbai being a large city, the left panel shows some pictures and lists a few places of tourist interest as well. We will learn more about the left panel later. The right panel (showing the map) contains certain navigation controls on top having the *left, right, top* and *down arrows* marked inside a circle, these are used for moving the view along the map in the desired direction. Google Maps are also “draggable”, which means that you can *drag* the visible area of the map in any direction by moving the mouse while keeping the left mouse button pressed, instead of using the navigation controls.

Below the navigation controls is an icon  for **My Location**, which is used to indicate your location on the map. Below this icon, is the zoom control, with a yellow figure at the top , called the **Pegman**, which can be dragged to any location on the map to switch to the *street view* of that location. Please note that *Street view* is available in only select cities.

At the left bottom of the Maps panel is the **Scale of the Map** that changes as you zoom in or pan out. On the extreme right bottom of the map is a square button with an arrow. This is the option for seeing the overview of your current map with respect to a larger area.

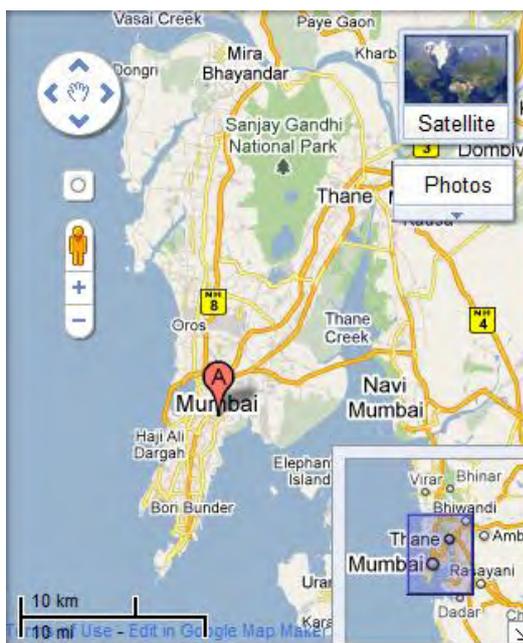


Figure 4.2 Maps Overview Option

The **overview** option gives you a more localised view of your search and the area visible on the map is placed inside a purple box, as shown in figure 4.2 on the left.

The overview provides a reference with respect to a larger area and is especially helpful when you are zoomed in a lot and do not have many known reference points.

When you are navigating the displayed map, the purple box will keep moving in the overview accordingly. Similarly, moving the purple box within the overview will change the area visible on the map.

The overview option can be closed anytime by clicking on the overview button.

At the top right side of the panel is a box with the tag “Satellite”. This box allows you to toggle the basic map with a satellite map. Under this satellite box is another rectangular box with a dropdown menu box. It may be showing either **Photos** or **Traffic** depending on your location. This box allows you to choose layers, which are nothing but location specific information.

This dropdown menu box shows you the various layers that are available for the area that you are viewing. The various options available are shown in figure 4.3 on the left. Remember that only the layers available in your area of interest are displayed and the *more* button displays all the layers, which may be available in select areas.

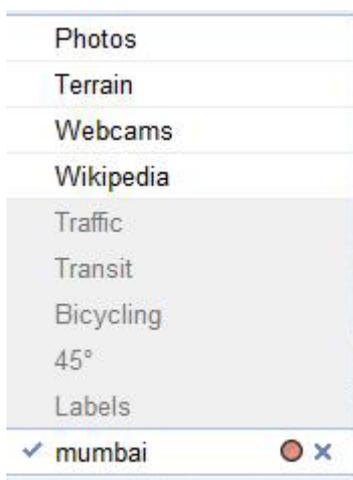


Figure 4.3 Drop Down Menu

- The **Photos** layer shows all the photos taken in the area, from around the world, superimposed on the map. As you zoom in to the area the photos become more relevant. If you want to view a larger image, simply click on the photo.
- The **Terrain** layer shows the 3D elevation view of the area highlighting mountains, creeks etc
- The **Webcams** layer shows the webcam snapshot of specific locations taken in the last fifteen minutes. These are public webcams located at fixed places. Clicking on the thumbnail will open a bigger picture.
- The **Wikipedia** layer shows geotagged articles from wikipedia about your search term. The places for which articles are available are marked with a ‘W’.
- The **Traffic** layer shows the traffic updates to enable you to find the best route to your destination. The traffic layer is available for select cities and becomes visible automatically when you open the area where it is available. Traffic conditions are indicated by a colour scheme, as shown in figure 4.4 below, superimposed on the map.



Figure 4.4 Color Scheme for Live Traffic Updates

- The **Transit** layer shows the public transportation available in your area. This option is also available only in select cities.
- The **Bicycling** layer helps you to find the biking trails in your area. This layer again is available only in select areas.
- The **Labels** layer is on by default and shows the names of streets and the names of the places of interest etc.

Having learned about the controls and options available in the right hand Maps panel, let us now see more ways we can use the Maps to our benefit. For this let us concentrate on the **left panel**.

4.2 The Search Feature in Maps

We have already seen that we can use the search bar on the Google Maps page to search for a desired location. In the same manner, we can look for businesses, local addresses, schools etc. Just type in the query and Google Maps does the rest. The search results are listed in the left panel sequentially indicated by an alphabet starting with “A” and the corresponding results are indicated with a marker on the map. The markers used may be as follows: -



The red colour marker is used for indicating the location queried by you. This same marker in blue indicates a user-generated content. Green colour marker is used to indicate destination points if you are trying to get directions.



If the location indicated is “approximate” then this marker is used. Smaller red circles indicate all results and not just the most relevant results, which have bigger markers as explained above.

By clicking on any marker an **Info Window** opens that gives information about the location. The information may contain address, contact details, photos, reviews etc. Info windows can be expanded by clicking on the title link or a “+” sign, if it appears in the window.

Let us see an example for schools in Thane, Maharashtra. We enter the text **Schools in Thane, Mumbai** in the search bar. The map, as shown in figure 4.5 below, appears.

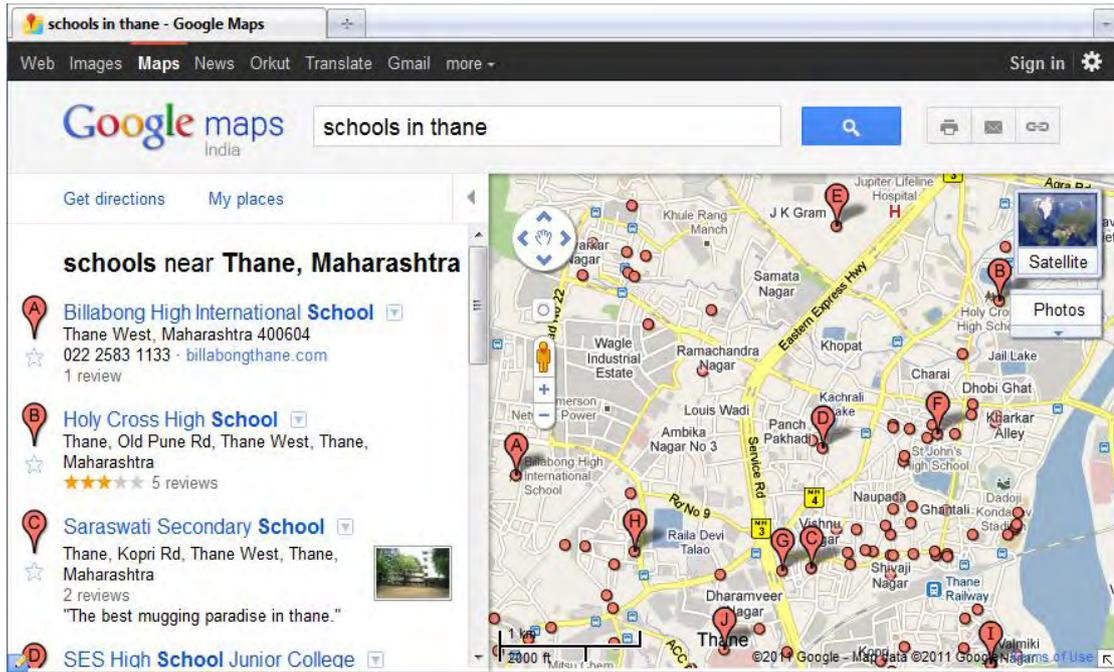


Figure 4.5 Screenshot of Search Results For "Schools in Thane"

The figure 4.5 shows all the popular schools in Thane with big red colour markers. The small red circular markers indicate kindergartens, tuition classes, colleges and other educational establishments. In the left panel, after the results list you have the option to go the next page. Doing this will present new results on the map.

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In a similar manner you can search for anything you want like department stores, pizza suppliers, cinema halls etc. and get more information about those.

4.3 Getting Directions

Ok, let's come back to the **left panel** again. At the top of the left panel are two prominent tabs, **Get directions** and **My places**. See figure 4.6 below. "Get directions" is a useful feature to find directions or to chart out a route from place **A** to place **B**. If you choose this option you are asked to specify your *starting location* in the field "A", and the final *destination* in field "B". You can also add multiple points en-route by using the **add destination** tab.

The Google Maps suggests the route between the two locations, which is also displayed in the right panel, and if there is more than one way of getting to your destination all routes are suggested in the left panel. On the Map, the first suggested route is highlighted in purple colour. The other suggested routes are seen if you hover your mouse over the alternate route in the left panel.

The figure 4.6 below shows the route between *Mumbai CST* and *Churchgate* in Mumbai. As can be seen, there are three routes we can take between the two points. The routes are indicated on the left panel along with the distances and approximate time factors involved. The first option is highlighted in the map and if you hover the mouse on the second option a comparison can be seen on the Map. Similarly, you can see the comparison between any two routes. You can also modify the route as per your liking. When you take your mouse cursor on any point on the highlighted route, you get the option to drag the route, as you want it.

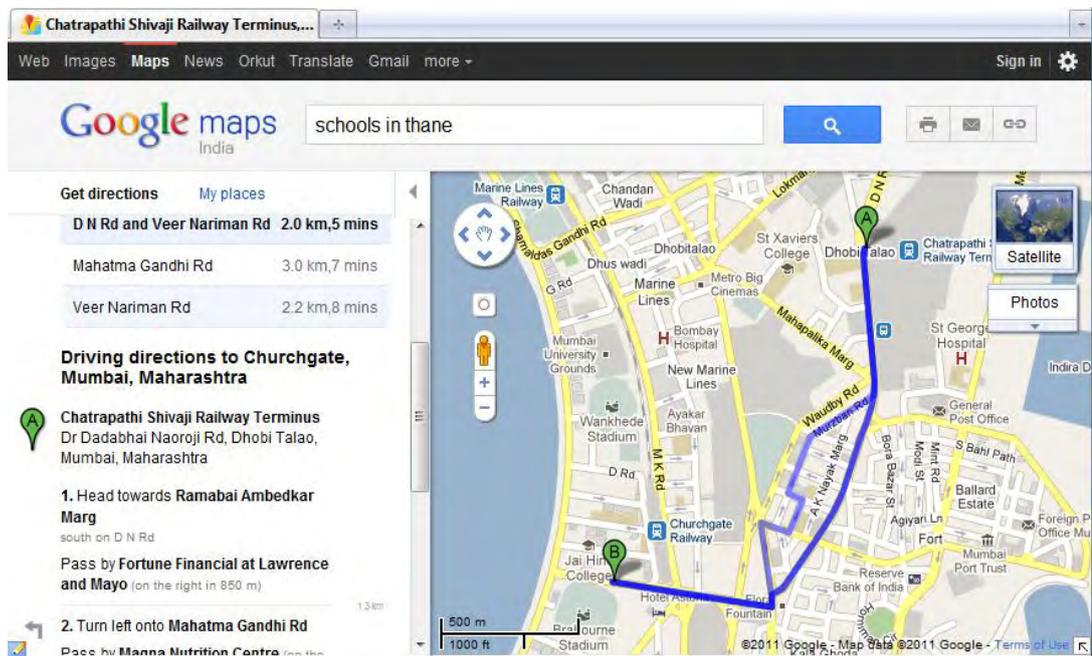


Figure 4.6 Get Directions

Under the suggested routes, you get the driving directions in text from point **A** to point **B**. In the present example, the driving directions from *Mumbai CST* to *Churchgate* is given in the left panel as shown in the figure 4.7 below.

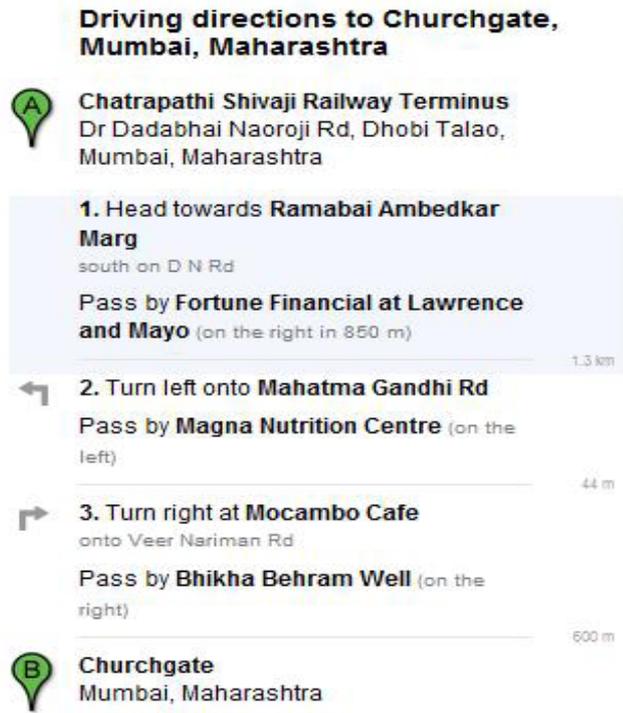


Figure 4.7 Left Panel Shows Driving Directions From Point A to Point B

You can print the directions with or without the map by using the Print button above the map. You can also customize the print by including mini maps for each step.

4.4 Embedding Maps in Blog/Website

Did you know that you can easily embed a map in your website or blog? The link symbol, provided above on the *top right corner* of the map (as can be seen in figures 4.5 and 4.8), can be used to create the HTML code for the map, which can be copied and pasted in your blog or website. This application can be used to present a map indicating the location for your business in the **Contact Us** page of the website.

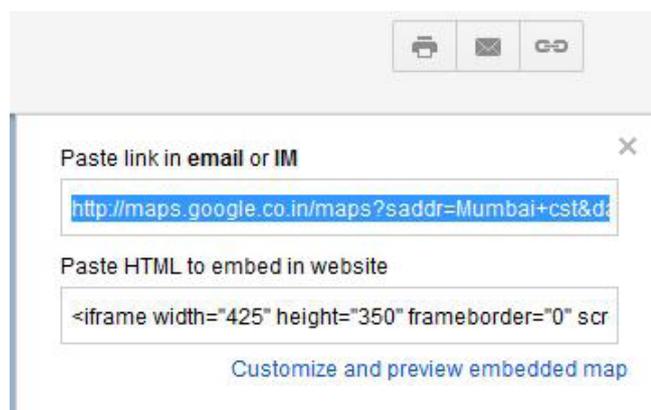


Figure 4.8 Embed Code for Maps

The size of the map can be changed to your preference by using the “**Customize and preview embedded map**” link seen below the box with the embed code.



“I studied English for 16 years but...
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons”
Jane, Chinese architect

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5 Google Places

In the last chapter, Google Maps, you learned how one could easily search for local businesses or places using the maps. You could be searching for anything from a local dentist, physicians, carpenters, shops, retailers, and big businesses to organisations, industries, factories, hospitals, hotels or buildings. Have you wondered as to how Google comes to know or gather so much information and data to be able to display such precise results on its maps? The answer is **Google Places**, where it is the users/owners who are submitting all the information.

5.1 About Google Places

Google Places is a free *listing* service wherein businesses and individuals can provide details about themselves. It differs from traditional listing services in that; there is no restriction on space. You can add detailed information on your address, products or services, photos, business hours, coupons, special offers, service areas and many other relevant details. Plus, you can also pinpoint your exact location on Google Maps as Google Places is integrated with it, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

There are millions of people searching Google Maps daily, so a free listing on Google Maps makes it easier for the customers to find your business. Using **Google Places**, you can list any number of businesses, if you run multiple businesses or a chain of shops, from a single account and you can also update your listings whenever and however you like, so that it is reflected in Google Maps.

If you do not have a business you can still use Google Places for finding, rating the places and sharing them with your friends.

Google claims that one out of every five searches conducted are pertaining to location. Add to that, the fact that most people search for businesses on the net. Google, being the leader in search, is the right place to advertise your business. For example if you are a dentist, and the people in your business area are searching the Internet for a dental clinic, wouldn't it be great if your dental clinic is listed right on top of the search results along with all the details?

5.2 Listing Your Business in Google Places

You can access Google Places at <http://www.google.com/places>. The homepage contains two tabs, one for rating and sharing places on Google and the other for listing your business. A screenshot of the page is given below in figure 5.1.

Signing up and creating a listing for your business is easy. One needs to sign in to his Google account in order to list a business. If you do not have a Google account you will be prompted to create one. Google keeps a tab on the listings being created to avoid ambiguity caused by multiple listings of the same business. This is done by using the phone number in conjunction with the country information, which you will be asked to provide as soon as you are signed in.

After you provide the country and phone details, you will be shown a list of businesses, *if information matching your phone number and country already exists with Google*.

It is possible that Google may already be having some information about your business. This might happen if someone has taken the initiative to add location of your business to Google Maps. In that case, you can edit the information related to the business instead of duplicating the entry.

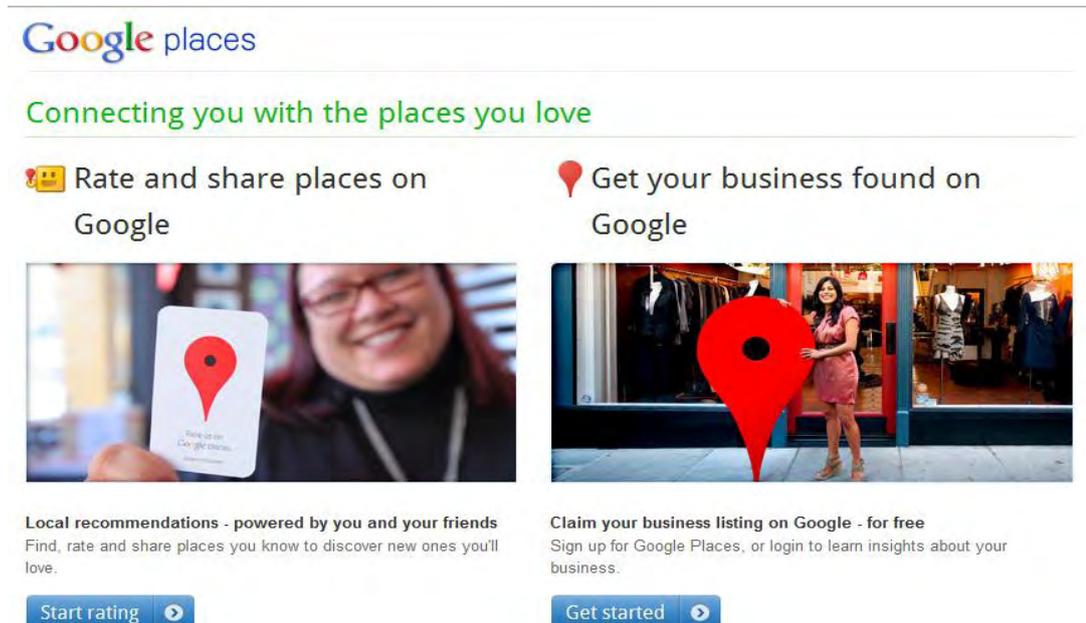


Figure 5.1 Google Places Home Page

If your business does not exist in the list of businesses displayed or if nothing is displayed then you can choose to **Add a Listing**. In this case you will have to fill out the **Basic Information** form wherein you will be required to provide details about your business like *company, address, telephone numbers, website URL*, if you have one, *category* etc.

A screenshot of the form is reproduced below in figure 5.2.

Country: *	United States <input type="button" value="v"/>
Company/Organization: *	<input type="text"/>
Street Address: *	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
City/Town: *	<input type="text"/>
State: *	Select state <input type="button" value="v"/>
ZIP: * [?]	<input type="text"/>
Main phone: *	9869172472
	Example: (201) 234-5678 Add more phone numbers
Email address:	<input type="text"/>
	Example: myname@example.com
Website:	<input type="text"/>
	Example: http://www.example.com
	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't have a website.
Description:	<input type="text"/>
	200 characters max, 200 characters left.
Category: *	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="q"/>
	Which categories (up to 5) best describe your business? Ex: Dentist, Wedding Photographer, Thai Restaurant Add another category

Figure 5.2 Basic Information Form Page

The form extends further than what is shown in figure 5.2 above, and you are asked to provide additional information on *service areas and location, hours of operation, and payment options* i.e. how you charge your customers. Next, you have the option to upload photos and videos related to your business. This could be product photos and videos or simply those showing your store / office. Uploading photos and videos can be a great way of enhancing the impact, of the listing, on your prospective customers.

While you fill out your business address, the Google Map on the right panel will try to show the location on the map of the area. If you feel the marker is in the right place, check the box provided below the map, otherwise you can move the marker to the desired location before checking the box.

Once you have submitted the Basic Information form, you will be asked to specify a verification method for validating your business listing. The screenshot of the verification form is given below in figure 5.3.

How would you like to validate your listing?

For your protection, we need to verify the information you've just given us. This can be done in one of 3 ways:

 **By phone**
We'll call you at this phone number

 **By SMS**
We'll send you an SMS at the following:
Mobile number:
Carrier:

 **By postcard (2-3 weeks)**
We'll send you a postcard in the mail to this address

litagency 1
345, sv road andheri,
Mumbai 400053
Maharashtra
India

If necessary, you may specify another recipient or enter a mailstop/mailbox number below. This information won't appear on Google Maps.

Contact name:

By clicking 'Finish,' you're authorizing Google to create or update your business listing for use in Google Maps or other Google services. You are also affirming that you have the right to create this listing and that you have read and agree to Google's [terms of service](#). There is currently no charge for creating or displaying listings. If this is a new listing or has a new address, you must verify the address via regular mail or telephone before the listing is activated. See next page for instructions.

Figure 5.3 Verification Page

You have three options (**Phone, SMS or Postcard**) to choose from. Irrespective of the method you choose, a **PIN** is given to you, which you have to use to validate your listing. The PIN allocation by phone / SMS is almost immediate and you can enter the PIN on the next page which is the dashboard for Google places. The post method takes about 2-3 weeks. Your listing will be published only after you have verified it. Verified listings appear with the words *Verified by Business Owner* and helps in making the listing look authentic. So make sure you don't forget to verify the listing.

Once you have listed your business successfully and it is reflected on Google Maps, the Google places dashboard gives you the statistics as to the number of page impressions that your listing has had and how many people have shown interest in the listing. The statistics can help you to refine your listing.

Irrespective of the size of your business, Google Places is a great way to be found on the Internet. Managed correctly and consistently, a listing of your businesses with Google Places can get you new customers, re-iterate your existence with the old ones and advertise your business lavishly without spending a dime.

6 Google Translate

Since the Internet is a global phenomenon, it goes without saying that people are using it in many different languages, although currently most web pages are in English. According to the estimates of the world online population by language for 2010, China has the most Internet users amongst the various countries and hence the usage of language Mandarin is more than other languages like Spanish, French, Italian, German etc. Even though English is the most common language on the Internet the rate at which the number of users are growing is far less for English than Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Arabic. This just goes to show how the foreign language Internet is rapidly expanding. See Figure 6.1. (Image Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Internet_usage)

Position	Language	Internet users	% of all
1	English	536,564,837	27.3
2	Chinese (Mandarin)	444,948,013	22.6
3	Spanish	153,309,074	7.8
4	Japanese	99,143,700	5.3
5	Portuguese	82,548,200	4.3
6	German	75,158,584	4.0
7	Arabic	65,365,400	3.3
8	French	59,779,525	3.2
9	Russian	59,700,000	2.5
10	Korean	39,440,000	2.1

Figure 6.1 Internet Users By Language

The presence of these other languages on the Internet makes the need for translation of these web pages or documents, from one language to another, quite obvious. This is where Google Translate comes to your aid.

Google Translate offers free translation service that you can use for instant translations between 58 different languages. You can use this service to translate individual words, sentences and web pages between any combinations of the supported languages. Google Translate is a very useful tool as it makes information accessible universally, regardless of the language in which it is written.

The Google Translate tab is available on the top Navigation bar on the Google home page and can be accessed directly from there or at <http://translate.google.com/>.

The Google Translate home page is very simple and easy to comprehend. See Figure 6.2. You can choose the languages that you wish to translate from the boxes provided on the top with the help of the drop down menu. Select the appropriate language that you wish to translate and also the language that you wish to translate it into and then paste the words, sentence or page (that you wish to translate) in the empty white box provided below the buttons.

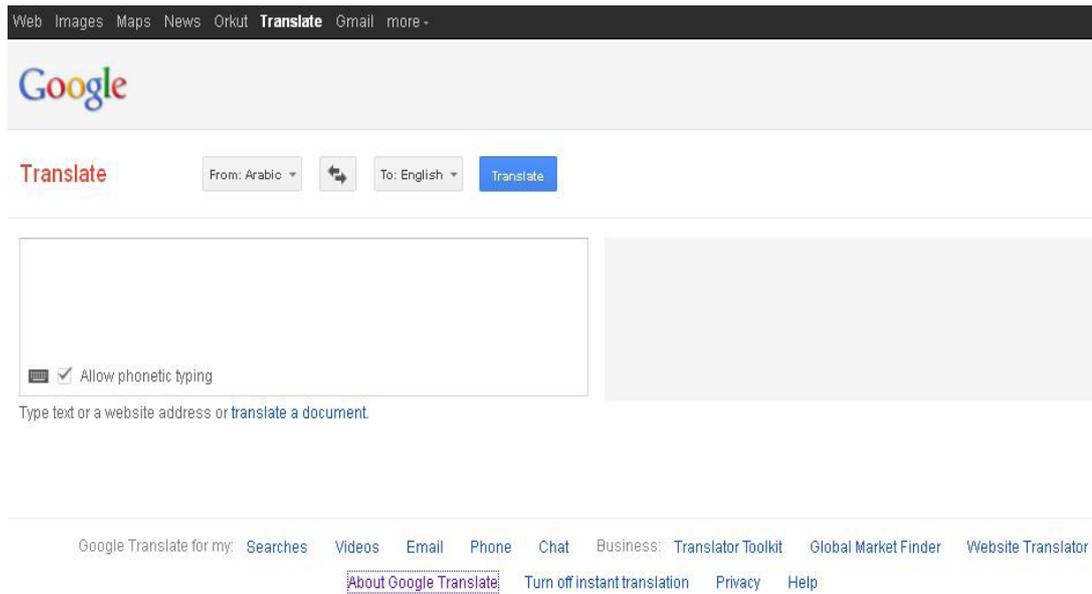


Figure 6.2 Google Translate Home Page

As you can see from the figure 6.2 above, you have three options, you can either type the text directly into the box, give the website address, or even translate a document from your computer. Once you are done, the translated text will be displayed in the grey box seen alongside.



Google Translate service can be used by individuals to translate their **searches, videos, email, phone** and **chat** as well. For businesses, Google has provided additional **Translator Toolkit, Global Market Finder** and **Website Translator**. The links to these services are provided at the bottom of the page as seen in figure 6.2.

There is also an option for phonetic typing available in the box, so one can also translate speech in this manner.

From the drop down menu of the languages available for translation you will be able to choose from a list of the following 58 languages currently supported by Google. See Figure 6.3 below.



Figure 6.3 Languages Currently Supported by Google for Translation

6.1 Google Translated Search

Google offers you the option to search for the best results by using the “*translated search*” option in Google Search. It determines which languages have the best information for your query and translates web results from those languages back to yours. This feature comes really handy especially when you search for a term in a foreign language on Google search as you may encounter search results, which are not in your native language.

A link “*Translate this page*” is shown alongside the search result, which can be used to view a machine translation of the page on Google Translate. You can also translate directly from the google search results page without leaving the page. All you need to do is type your translation query directly into the search box and see the translation result appear immediately. See Figures 6.4 (a, b & c) below.



Figure 6.4(a) Google Translated Search

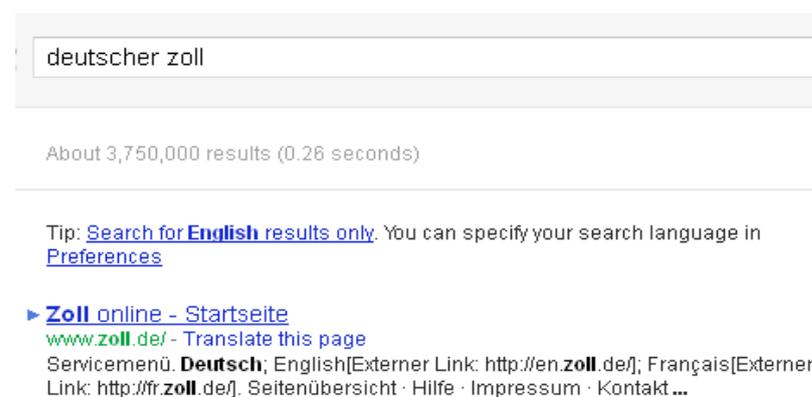


Figure 6.4(b) "Translate this page" links



Figure 6.4(c) Translate directly from Google Search

6.2 Translate Video, Email and Chat

Google Translate also helps with the translation of sub-titles or captions in a You Tube video, provided the captions were enabled while uploading the video. Videos with captions display this small logo at the bottom of the player:  If you want to switch on the subtitles, just click on the button. The sub-titles will be shown in the default language. If you want to choose some other language then click on the  button again and in the resulting pop-up window select *Translate Caption*, a new dialogue box will open and you can choose the language you want to see the subtitles in.

If you use Gmail, it can automatically translate foreign email messages into your own language. Just enable ‘**Message translation**’ in Gmail Labs by first clicking the gear icon  in the upper-right, selecting **Mail Settings** and clicking on **Labs** tab. After you have selected the “**Enable**” radio button next to it, you can select **Save Changes**. Now you are all set, so that the next time you receive a message in a foreign language you’ll see a header at the top of the message with a link that says **Translate message**. Click this and your message will be translated inline (no need to open a new tab or window). Similarly, you can also translate entire conversations by clicking on **Translate conversation** next to the globe icon on the right side of the conversation. One can easily change the default language settings of messages by clicking on the **General** tab of your Gmail settings and checking the box next to the **Enable** message translation and setting the default display language to the one you desire.

While in Gmail, you can also have a multilingual chat with your overseas friends. All you need to do is to just add the **Google Translate Chat Bot** to your friends list using Google Talk and break down the language barrier. You can use any of the two chat bots to help translate the chat in real time. Google provides a list of the chat bots used for various languages for this purpose. To use a bot, add it to your friends list and send it the message that you want translated. If you’re using the *Google Talk Gadget*, you can also get your conversation translated by inviting a bot to a group chat with a friend. Don’t forget to add @bot.talk.google.com to your friends list to use this feature.

7 Google Scholar

There are many people from varied disciplines; like students, teachers, professors, scientists, writers, historians or individuals who use the Internet for their scholarly research. Using the main Google Search tool may not generate the desired search results effectively; therefore Google came up with the **Google Scholar** Search tool that provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. Here, you can use the search tool much more effectively across the various sources available on the Internet: articles, theses, books, abstracts and court opinions, from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities and other web sites.

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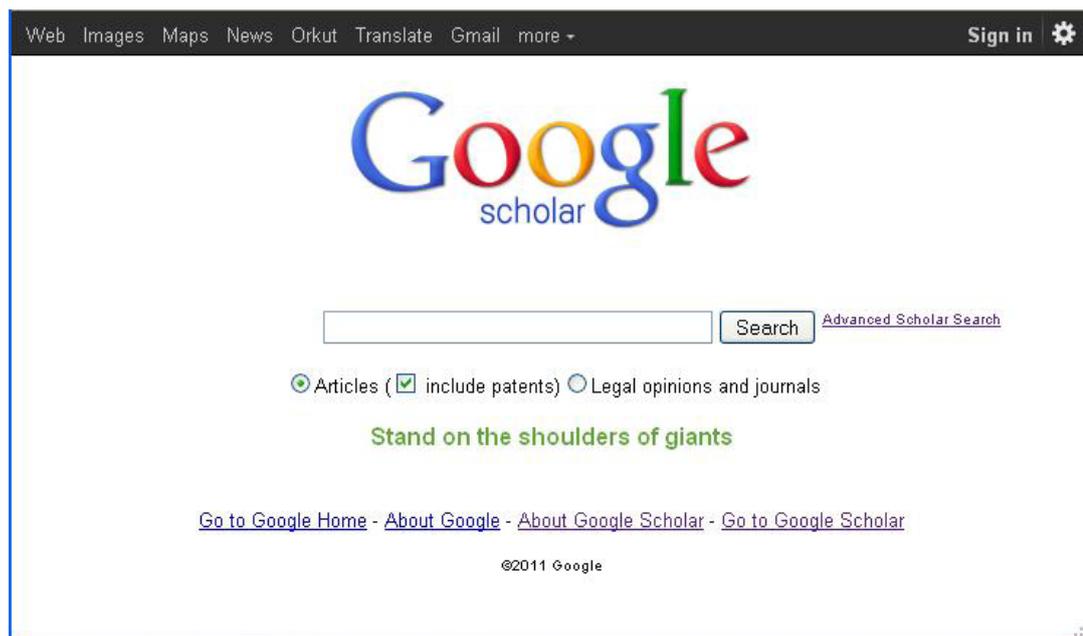


Figure 7.1 Google Scholar Home Page

Google Scholar search tool can be accessed from the top navigation bar on the Google home page or at <http://scholar.google.com/>. The Google Scholar page is shown in the figure 7.1 above. This search tool looks similar to the basic Google search tool with the exception that there are a few more options provided to narrow down your search including the “**Advanced Scholar Search**”.

Using this search tool for your scholarly research, you can broadly search within “**Articles**” that may or may not “**include patents**”; you can either check this box or leave it unchecked, or **Legal opinions and journals**. Google Scholar can be used to:

- **Search** diverse sources from one convenient place
- **Find** articles, theses, books, abstracts or court opinions
- **Locate** the complete document through your library or on the web
- **Learn** about key scholarly literature in any area of research

You can easily narrow down the search and make it more focused depending on what you are looking for. One way to increase the accuracy and effectiveness of your searches on Google Scholar is by adding “*operators*” that fine-tune your search terms. The Google Scholar Operators include *Author Search*, *Publication Restrict*, *Date Restrict*, *Legal opinions and journals*, *Jurisdiction Restrict* and *other Operators*.

You can either use the search operators directly in the Google Scholar search box or use the “*advanced scholar search*”, which can give better results.

7.1 Advanced Scholar Search

Unlike the basic search where the link for advanced search appears only on the search results page, in Google Scholar the link for **Advanced Scholar Search**, is provided on the home page itself as seen in the figure 7.1 above. The **Advanced Scholar Search page** gives you many options to help narrow down your search. See figures 7.2 (a & b) below. Since the full page cannot be shown in one figure, it has been shown in two parts.

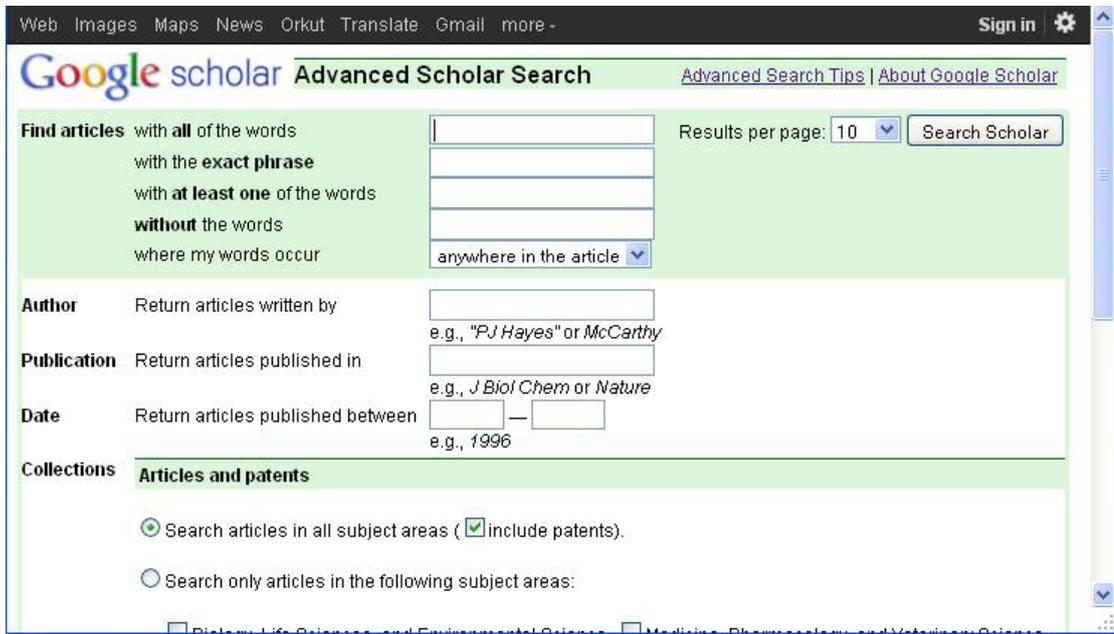


Figure 7.2 (a) Advanced Scholar Search Form part1

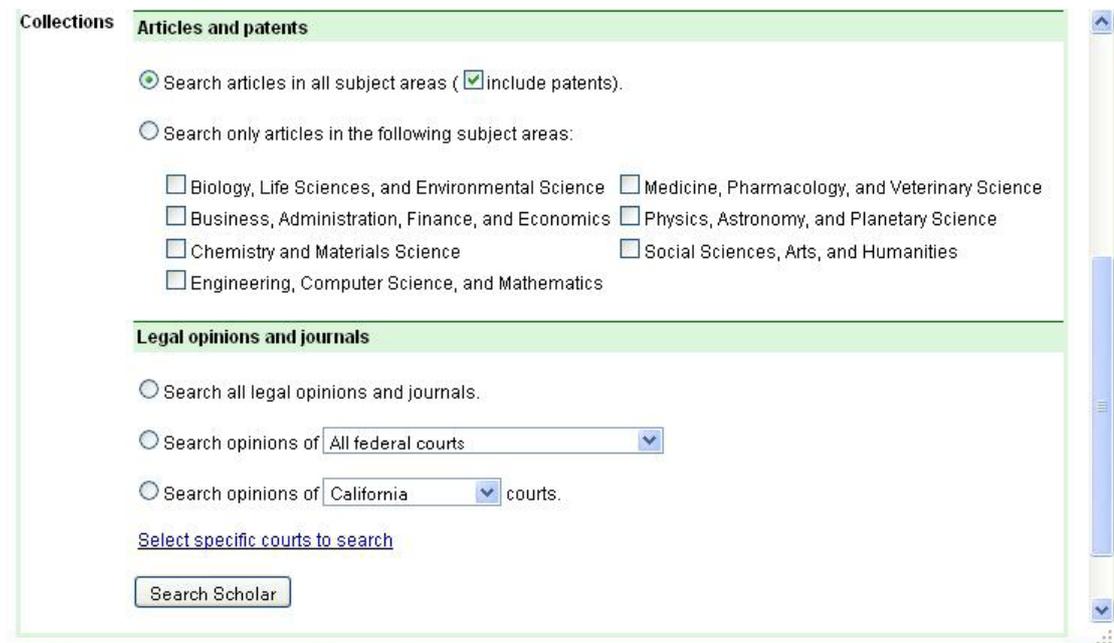


Figure 7.2 (b) Advanced Scholar Search Form part 2

The various options available in the advanced search form to make your search faster and relevant are explained below.

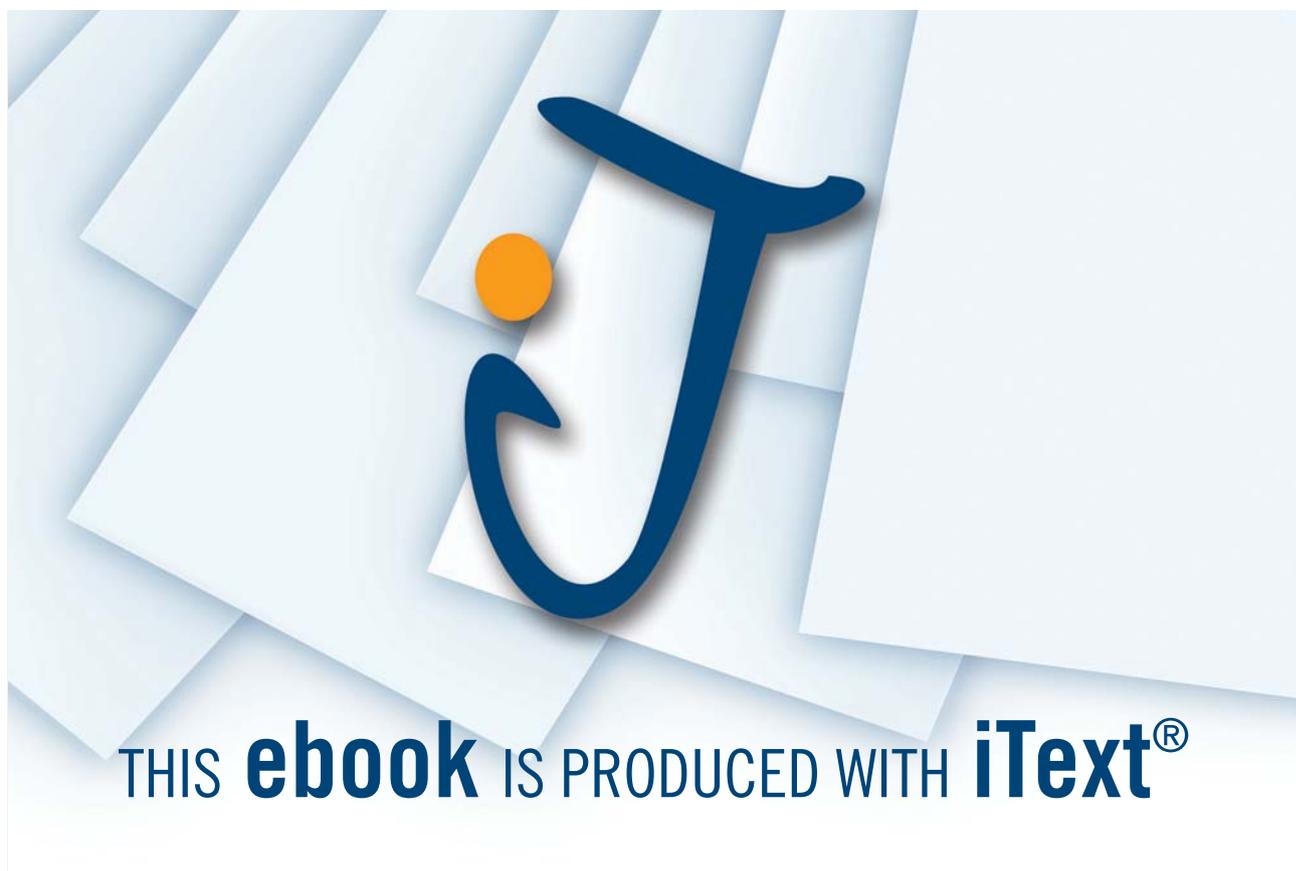
- **Find Articles:**

You can easily search for articles using this tool box by copy/pasting or typing words or sentences into the relevant boxes provided with the various options of searching “with **all** of the words”, “with the **exact phrase**”, “with **at least one** of the words”, “**without** the words” or “where my words occur” (here select the appropriate choice from the drop down menu as *anywhere in the article* or *title of the article*).

- **Search by Author:**

You can search by author using the “author:” operator, e.g. author: “Wordsworth” or author: “William Wordsworth”. This is the most effective way to find a specific paper. The operator “author:” should be used specifically in cases where a word is both a person’s name and a common noun, and make sure that there is no space between “author:” and your search term.

If you know exactly what you are searching for, then you can simply type the name of the author along with the name of the work, research or study etc. to get the desired results. For e.g. the search for [L Björkman amalgam fillings] returns papers on the subject of amalgam fillings written by people or person named L Björkman. You can also search by using the authors full name, last name or even initials by entering the name in quotes: “L Björkman”.



- **Search by Publication:**

You can search for specific articles from specific journals or publications that they are published in. To do this, simply enter the name of the journal or publication that you are searching for in the box provided, for example: Journal of clinical epidemiology.

Here you can use the “**Publication Restrict**” operator to refine your search. This operator can be used only in the advanced scholar search. A publication-restricted search only returns results with specific words from a specific publication.

For example, if you want to search the *Journal of clinical epidemiology* for articles about health survey, you might start like this:

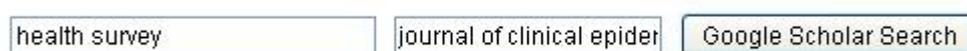


Figure 7.3 Google Advanced Scholar Search Bar

However, you need to keep in mind that these “*publication-restrict*” searches may be incomplete as Google Scholar gathers bibliographical data from many sources, including automatically extracting it from text and citations. Therefore, the information that you get may be incomplete or even incorrect. But, these searches can be effective if you know exactly what you are looking for.

- **Search by Title or Date:**

If you want to search for a particular paper by its title, simply type the title in quotations within the search box to get the desired results. For example, “The Discovery of India”.

Unfortunately, Google Scholar does not yet support search by date, so you will not be able to search for specific dates or sort according to dates. But you can select the date range from the drop down menu labelled *anytime* provided under the search box.

- **Search for Court Opinions:**

Currently this feature supports documentation from the US Courts only. You can search for court opinions by selecting the *Legal opinions and journals* on the Google Scholar home page or in the dropdown menu on the search results page. Similarly you can also search for court opinions from a particular jurisdiction by selecting specific jurisdictions on the “**Advanced Scholar Search**” page.

In the advanced scholar page you have the option to search all legal opinions and journals, search opinions across specific courts (by choosing appropriate court from the various options provided in the drop down menu) and also search opinions in different states in the US (by selecting the appropriate state from the drop down menu).

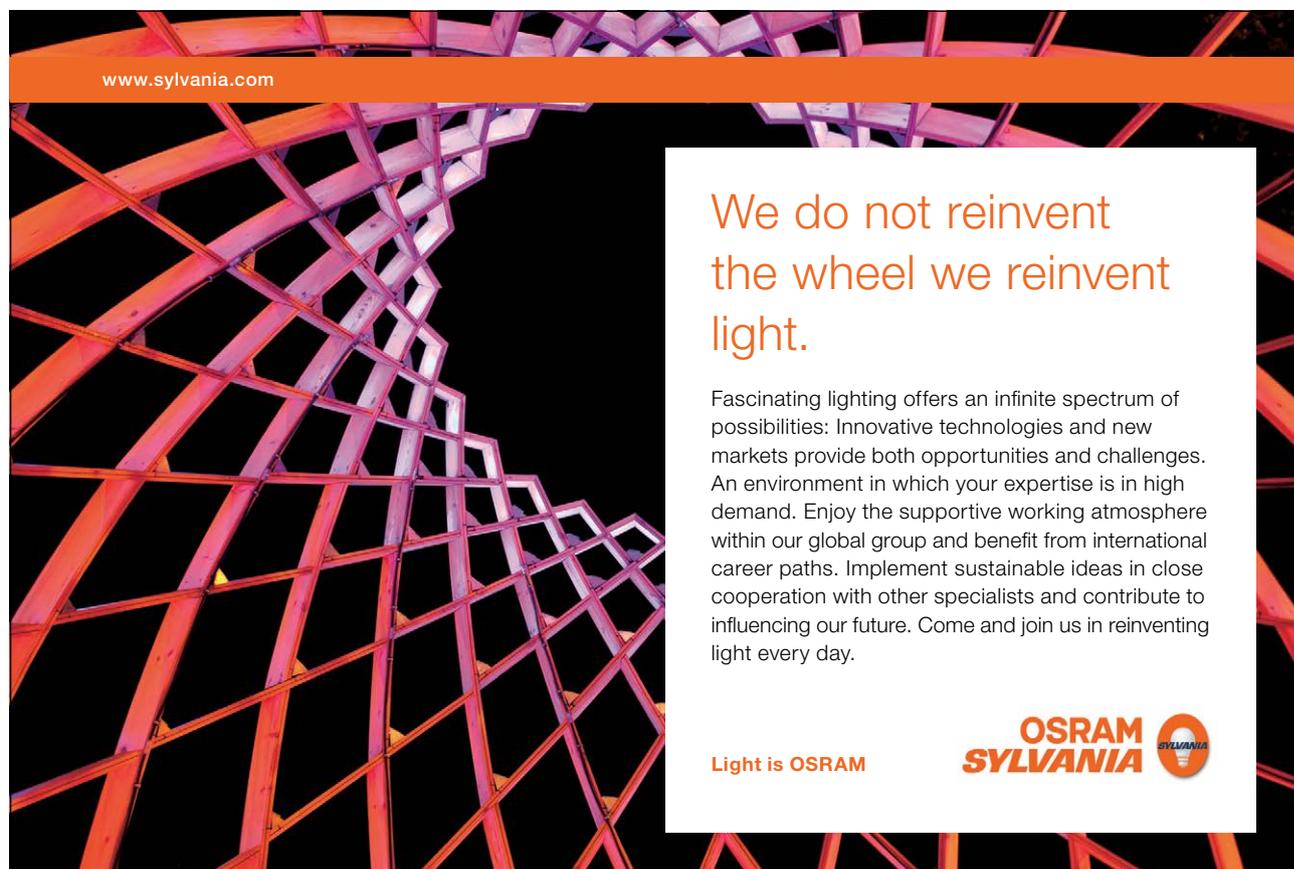
7.2 Google Scholar Library Links

Another very interesting and useful feature of the Google Scholar search is the **library links** that would prove especially valuable to students across the globe. In order to make the scholarly search easier for students, Google has introduced the **Library Links Program**, wherein the various libraries from across campuses can register to participate. The registration is pretty simple and free. Once a library is registered into the program, Google will be able to determine which journals and papers it has subscribed to electronically and is then able to link to articles from within these sources, when they are available. For more detailed information about this program visit <http://scholar.google.co.in/intl/en/scholar/libraries.html>.

Using this library links feature, a student would know immediately if a particular citation or abstract or document is available in the local library, as Google Scholar will provide special links to them in the search results. On-campus users at participating libraries will see these additional links and can access the documents online. To do so, follow these simple steps:

- Click on **Scholar Preferences**. (http://scholar.google.com/scholar_preferences)
- Type the name of your library in the 'Library Links' section.
- Click **Save preferences**.
- Start searching with links to your library's resources

If your library is not already participating in the Google Library Links Program, you can recommend the same to them.



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Section II: Moving on to the Cloud

8 iGoogle

In the first chapter we learned how to make the Google homepage more attractive by changing the background. It does not stop there. You can in fact, customize your Home page further, by using the Google product **iGoogle**. iGoogle allows you to personalize your homepage with the help of a lot of gadgets. The search bar remains on top of course, but the other gadgets on your home page tremendously improve access to information or activities about your favourite things. You can get your mail, news feed, weather forecast etc without leaving your homepage.

8.1 Setting Up iGoogle

On your Google homepage there is a setting icon in the shape of a gear from where you can choose **iGoogle** from the dropdown menu. This opens a new window titled 'Create your own homepage in under 30 seconds' as shown in figure 8.1 below.



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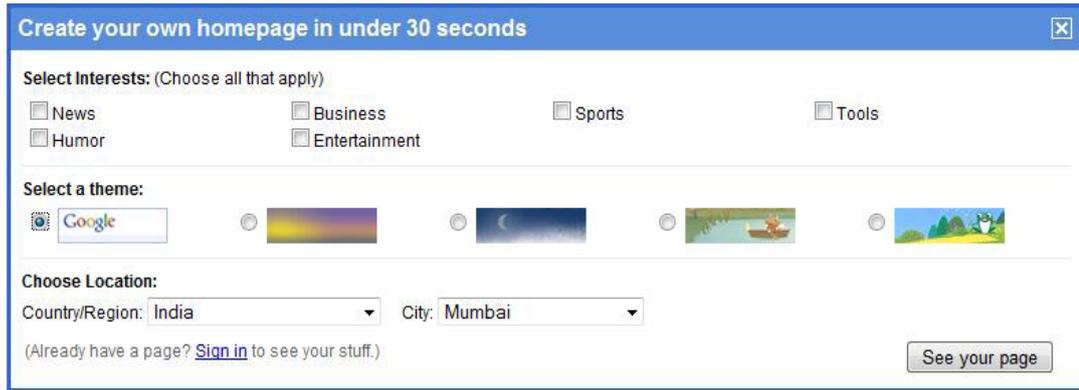


Figure 8.1 Setting up iGoogle Home Page

Choose some interests out of the options, select a theme and then enter your country and city. Your iGoogle page is created instantly and you can have a look at it using the ‘See your page’ button. Before we go further, just know that you can switch to the plain vanilla version of Google called the “classic view” anytime by using the settings icon.

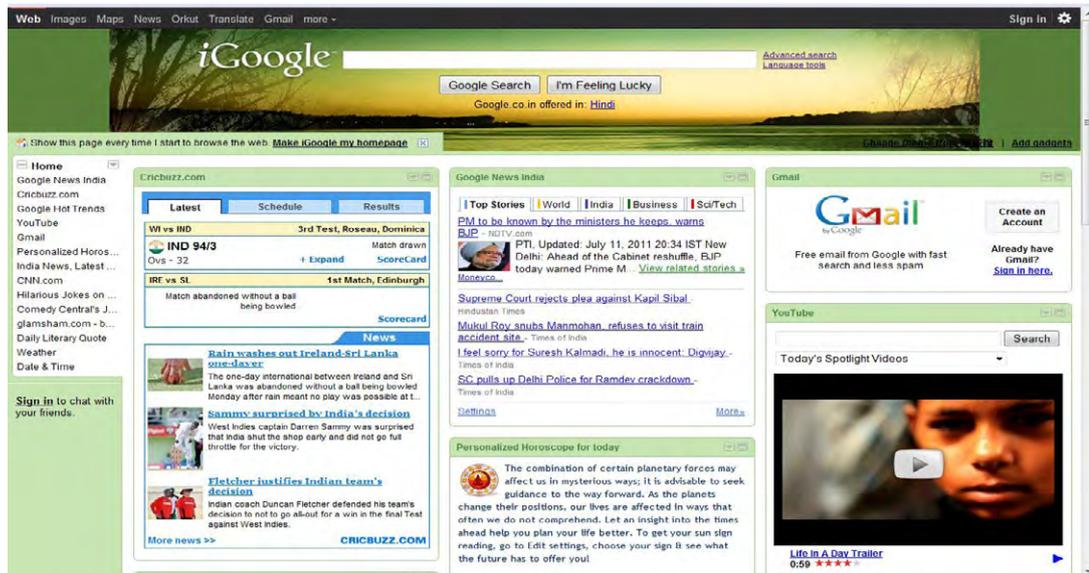


Figure 8.2 A Customised iGoogle Home Page

The customised iGoogle Home page looks something like that shown in figure 8.2 above. However you can customise it further by using the edit features available in iGoogle. The page extends well below what you see in the figure and has a lot more content. On the left hand side you can see the Home tab, which contains the navigation for all the gadgets on your page. You can edit this tab by clicking on the down arrow on the right side.



Figure 8.3 Drop Down Menu

The dropdown menu as seen in the figure 8.3 has the options to edit the Home tab, share the tab with a friend (you need to be signed in) or you can add a tab. The 'Edit this tab', leads to the iGoogle settings page. Here you can delete all the gadgets that you do not want on your page, add more gadgets and also change the theme and layout of your iGoogle homepage.

Please note that the option to change the theme as well as the option to **Add gadgets** is also available on the right side of your iGoogle home page, so you do not have to go to settings every time you want to add a gadget.

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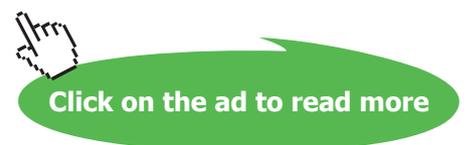


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When you first start out, all the gadgets appear under the **Home** tab. You can categorize and organize your gadgets by creating more tabs and putting the gadgets in those tabs.

8.2 Adding Gadgets

Adding Gadgets is simple and you can choose from a variety of gadgets available. As shown in figure 8.4, the available gadgets are organized into categories, which are displayed on the left side and the gadgets corresponding to the category selected are displayed on the right side of the page. By default, “**All categories**” are displayed and you can choose the category you want. You can thus search for the gadgets that you want on your iGoogle homepage. When you have found what you are interested in, click on the **Add it now** button under the gadget and it would be added to the **Home** tab. Thereafter move the gadget under the appropriate tab.

Remember that some gadgets like the *Gmail* gadget and the *Chat* gadget may require you to be logged in to function the way they are supposed to.

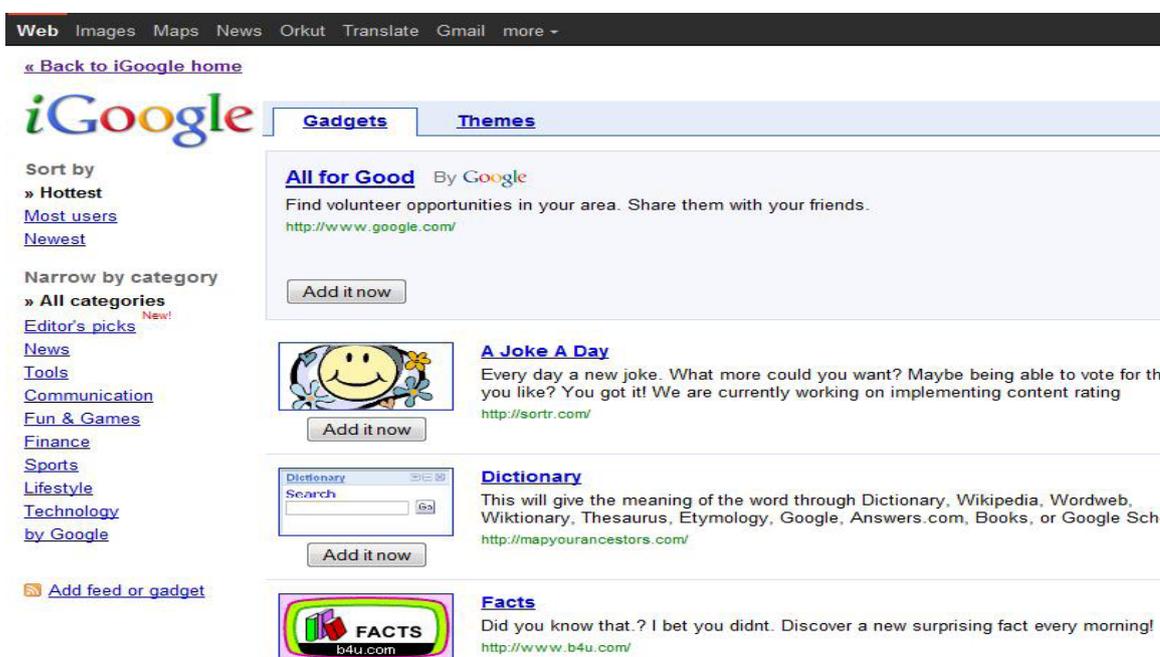


Figure 8.4 Adding Gadgets in iGoogle Home Page

8.3 Editing the Gadgets

All the gadgets have the provision to be edited independently and you have the options to *edit the gadget*, *delete the gadget*, *share the gadget*, *minimise the gadget*. There is also an option *You might also like*, which will show you more gadgets similar to the one which you are on or ones which other people using the current gadget are also using. On the edit page you can also manage your tabs and personal information.

8.4 Adding Feeds

You can also add feeds from your favourite sites. The feed will look like any other Google gadget and will give you real time updates from the site. Adding a feed is similar to what has already been explained earlier in the Google Reader chapter and you just need to provide the feed URL.

Using iGoogle lets you have everything on the same page, right from the Google Search bar, Gmail, Calendar, news feeds, weather, time and anything else of interest to you and you don't have to keep opening and closing pages every now and then.

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Real work
International opportunities
Three work placements



9 Google Calendar

Among the many free services and applications that Google provides to its users is the **Google Calendar**. You can use this free online calendar very easily to keep track of all the important events in one place. The application can be accessed from the top navigation bar of the Google home page. If you already have a Google account, then you can sign in with your Google username and password and use the application as seen in the figure 9.1 below.

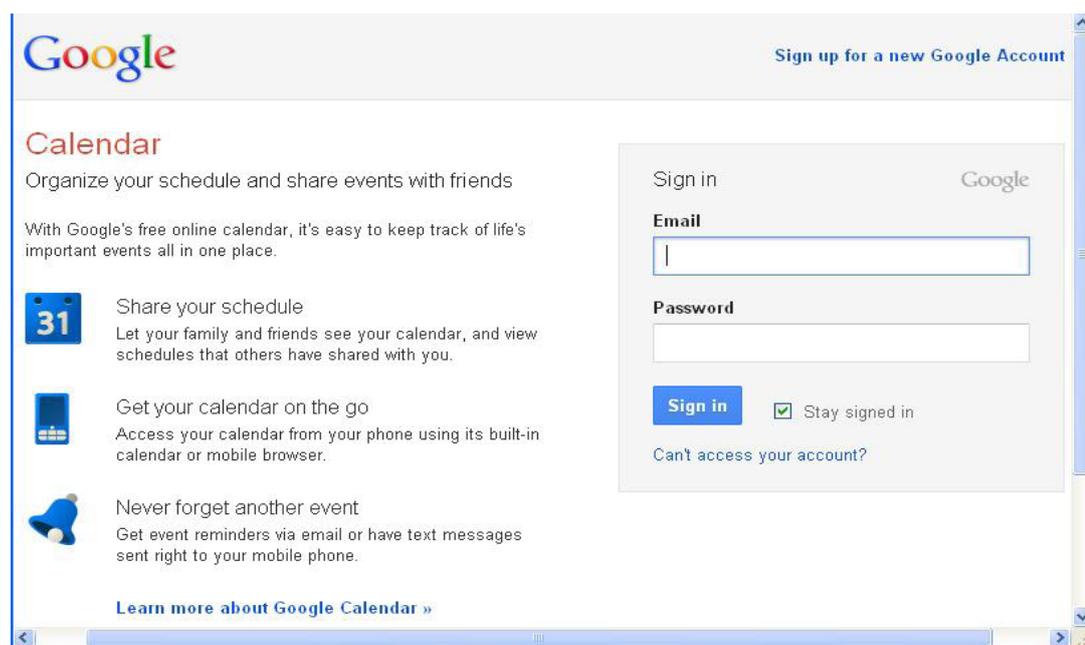


Figure 9.1 Google Calendar Home Page

The calendar application is very much similar to your desktop calendar except that this feature is online and so all your important dates, events and meetings or appointments are on the cloud and therefore can be accessed from anywhere. Not many people are aware of the availability and the wide scope of usage of this particular application offered by Google.

9.1 Using the Google Calendar

It is very easy to organise your life and schedules with the help of the Google Calendar in the following ways:

1. **Share your schedule** with your co-workers, friends or family by letting them see your calendar and in the same way, you can also view the schedules that others have shared with you. In this manner, you can easily co-ordinate dates and events with each other.
2. **Get mobile** with your calendar with the two-way syncing to your mobile phone's built-in calendar or a mobile version of Google Calendar that's made for the small screen. In this manner you can easily access your calendar while you are away from your desk.

3. **Remember** all the important events, dates or appointments with the customisable reminders that help you to stay on schedule. Google Calendar offers you the option of getting notifications by email or via text messages on your phone.
4. **You can send invitations and track RSVPs** using the Google Calendar. Invite people to events on your calendar and your guests can send RSVPs to your events via email or Google Calendar itself.
5. You can also **sync the Google Calendar with your desktop applications** and access your calendar however and wherever you want by syncing events with Microsoft Outlook, Apple iCal and Mozilla Sunbird.
6. The best part is that you can also **work offline**. You can view a read-only version of your calendar no matter where you are even when you don't have an Internet connection.

Once you sign in to the Google Calendar using your Google username and password, the calendar page opens as seen in the figure 9.2 below:

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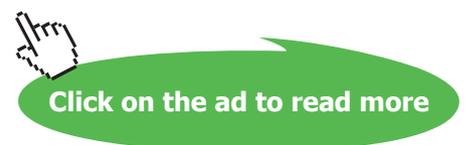
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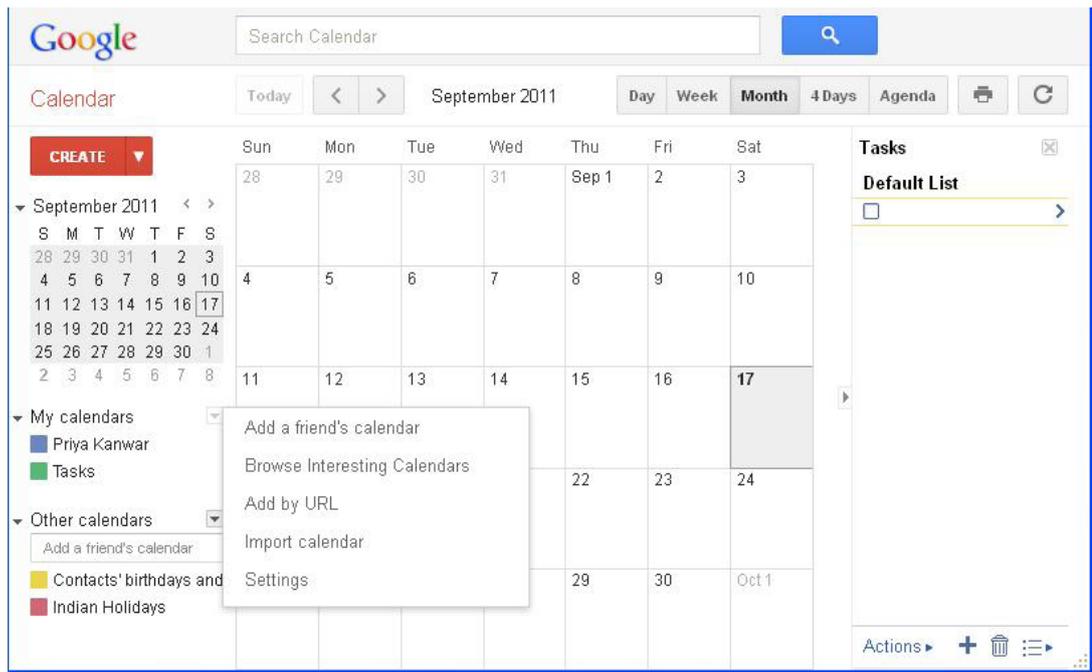


Figure 9.2 The Google Calendar Signed In Page

When you sign in, by default, the current month calendar is opened. You can choose the view mode to display the calendar for a day, week, 4 days, and month or as per agenda. The Day, Week and 4 days view modes display the time slots also and can be used to create events or appointment slots. The month view mode allows you to create tasks in addition to the events.

You can easily “Create” a new event by either using the red **Create** button provided on the top left hand side bar or simply by clicking on the date/time box in the view. The events will be seen on the calendar as per the date or time and you can also set reminders in the form of email/pop-ups.

The tasks are listed on the right hand side bar and in addition to creating tasks in the month view mode, you can also add new tasks to your day or month by clicking on the > besides the task. The Tasks display also allows you to edit/add notes to existing tasks.

Google Calendar also allows you to add your friend’s calendars or other calendars, birthdays, and holidays.

One can easily control the various features available in the Google Calendar by going to the “**Settings**” and using “**Labs**” to *enable* or *disable* any of the features by selecting the appropriate radio button and saving your choices.

Gentle Reminders, Automatically declining events, Event attachments, Event Flair, Smart rescheduler, Who’s my one-on-one with, Year view, Add any gadget by URL, Background Image, Free or busy, Next meeting, Jump to date and World Clock are the features that are available at present that you can enable or disable as per your choice.

10 Google Docs

Almost every individual working in an office, businessmen, salespersons, executives or even writers need to create documents, spreadsheets and Power Point presentations with images for official or personal reasons. Earlier, these documents were being created and stored in the personal computer of the individual or the office computer and a backup of the documents had to be taken on a separate device that could also serve the purpose of carrying the files with you to another location, in case you needed to give a presentation elsewhere, or refer to the documents on the go. Of course, things became a little easier when laptops came into the picture, as they could be carried from one place to another quite easily. But, the risks of losing the entire data or file from the hard disk of the computer or even from a portable storage device could not be ignored.

There was also a problem with collaborating on and sharing the documents or files with other people or colleagues who were using different computers. Of course, one can share documents within a network but that is largely constrained by the physical location of the computers. Then there is also the issue of different word processors being used on different machines. For people who were geographically separated from one another, the only way to collaborate on or share documents was by sending them as attachments via e-mails. Thus, the documents could not be edited in real-time and caused delays in getting them ready. There is also a limitation in the e-mails, as large files cannot be sent as attachments.

With the advancements in Internet technology and the emergence of wireless connectivity, a lot of things changed, along with the way people could access the Internet very easily from anywhere and everywhere using their mobile phones or laptops. It was these developments that caused Google to come out with **Google Docs** also known as **Google Documents**, which is a free web based office suite that could be used by anyone from anywhere, if they had an Internet connection. Google Docs allows its users to create, edit and save documents both online and even offline, as well as share and collaborate work with others in real time.

Google Docs can be accessed from the top navigation bar of the Google home page or at <https://docs.google.com/>

10.1 Benefits of Working with Google Docs

- Google Docs provides you with the office editor and the office suite, which means that you can easily create any type of document online like; Word document, Power Point presentation, Excel spreadsheets or even images. Once you have created the document, you can also share and collaborate them with others and allow them to edit it in real-time as well.
- If you have created certain files or documents on your desktop computer, they can easily be uploaded to Google Docs using the Internet. This serves a very handy way to store and keep a backup of all your important files in one place on the cloud, where it can be accessed from anywhere. What's more, with Google Docs you can also work in the offline mode, by simply installing its software on your computer, thereby making it easier for you to sync your documents.
- Working on web-based software also means that you can work across operating systems, whether it is a Windows PC, Mac or a Linux based OS. Therefore when you are collaborating with others, Google Docs eliminates the need to send files back and forth multiple times and everyone sees the document in the same format. Google Docs support various formats like DOC, DOCX, PDF, XLS, PPT, RTF and many more.

- Google Docs is a secure web application. Therefore, you can be sure that your data will not be accessible to anyone, unless you decide to share it. Since the data would be residing on Google servers, chances of it being lost are minimal. The data is constantly backed up to provide sufficient mitigation of risk in case of hardware issues. Google service are reliable and they offer a 99.99% uptime, therefore one does not have to worry about data availability. Not only that, the security of documents with respect to infection with viruses is also taken care of.
- You need to have a Google account for working with Google Docs. Registration is free and if you have a Google account, you can use that to access Docs. Google Docs offers 1GB of storage space for the free account, however please note that this limit is for documents not created with Google Docs and there is no limit for storage space for documents created within Google Docs.
- Another major advantage of using web-based software is that not only does the software meet your requirement now but also gets better with time. Unlike software installed on a PC, you do not need to keep updating or upgrading the software to get new advanced features. As soon as new features are added, they become available to all users.

10.2 What You Can Do With Google Docs

Google Docs help you to undertake almost all tasks offered by a machine hosted office suite. Currently the elements, which form part of the Google Docs suite are; **Documents, Spreadsheets, Presentations, Drawings** and **Forms**. These are the applications, which are more frequently used by average users and hence will cater for most number of people. The Figure 10.1 below shows the Google Docs Home page with the nav bar and various items displayed.



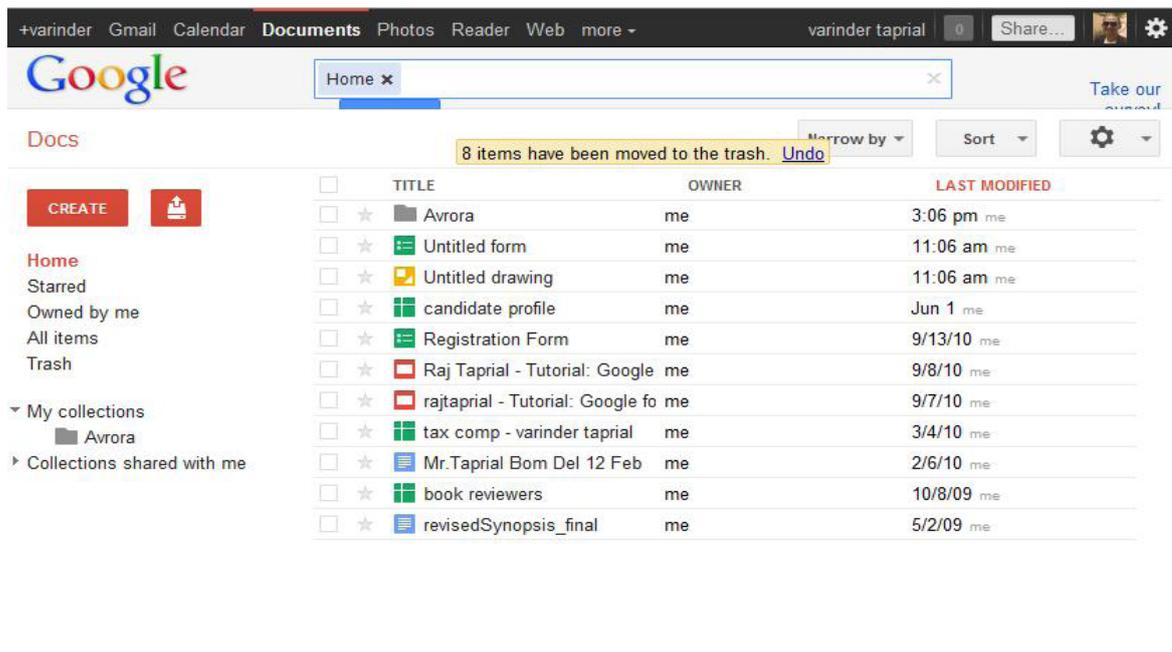


Figure 10.1 Google Docs Signed In Page

You can easily create documents from scratch or upload your existing files. All the basic tools for editing and formatting documents like bullets, adding tables, fonts etc are available for making compelling documents. The toolbar buttons are simple and familiar and hence the editing is quite easy.

Sharing your documents or collaborating with others in real time with Google Documents is a breeze. You can invite others as viewers or collaborators by simply entering their email addresses. Anyone you’ve invited to either view or edit your documents can access it as soon as they sign in. Multiple people can view or edit the documents simultaneously. At the time of writing, a document can be shared with up to 200 viewers and collaborators and up to 10 people can work on the document simultaneously. For spreadsheets a chat window is provided, which allows the collaborators to chat while viewing or editing the documents. The document revision history keeps a track of who edited what and when.

In addition, Google Docs has an auto save feature, which regularly saves your documents, and you do not have to worry about data loss due to power outage or hardware failure. You can also store and organize your documents in manageable collections within Google Docs, so it is easy to find and retrieve documents. “Collections” work on the same concept as the more conventional folders.

Google Docs allows you to publish documents as web pages with just a click. You can also control who has access to your document very easily. If required you can also publish the document directly to your blog.

Google has thousands of templates in the templates gallery that cater for almost any requirement, which you can use to create interesting content. This can potentially save you a lot of time and effort in designing and formatting your documents from scratch.

10.3 Elements of Google Docs

- **Documents**

The toolbar in Google Documents is simple to navigate and contains the familiar editing tools that are used to format the documents the way we want. In addition to the basic tools required for formatting and editing, there is a *translate option*, *comment option* as well as the *collaborate option* which allows you to either share the document with others or send it as an attachment with an email, all this without leaving the current window.

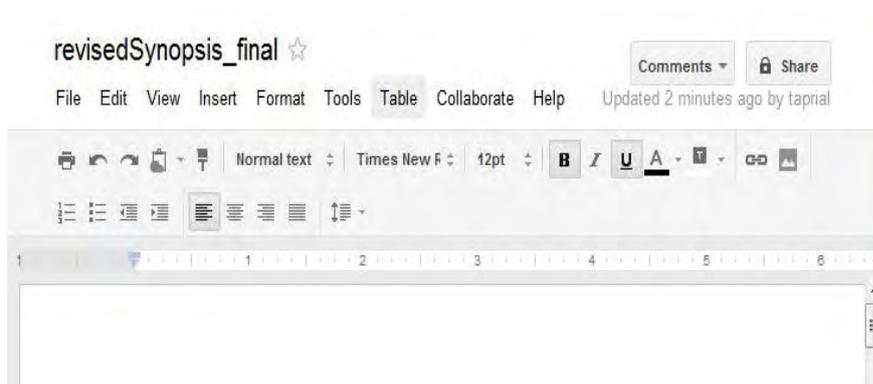


Figure 10.2 Google Docs Word Document Tool bar

The revision history is maintained and you can roll back to any version at any time. The documents provide conversion to and from Word, Open Office, PDF, RTE, HTML and TXT format.

- **Spreadsheets**

Just like the Documents toolbar, the spreadsheet toolbar is simple to use and contains familiar icons to make working easier.

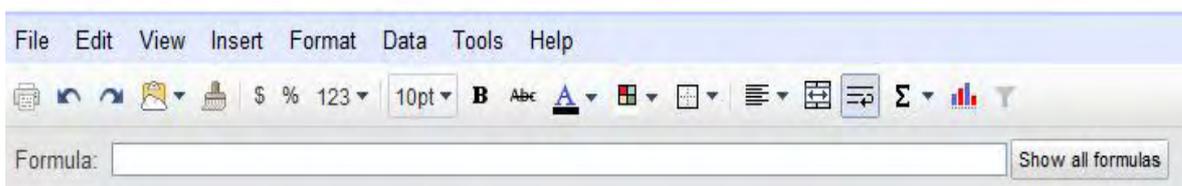


Figure 10.3 Google Docs Spreadsheets Tool Bar

With Spreadsheets you can import and convert the .xls, .csv, .txt and .ods formatted data and export to all these formats in addition to the HTML and PDF formats. You can insert / create charts, gadgets etc and also have the provision to embed the spreadsheet on your blog or website.

- **Forms**

With Google Docs you can easily create forms or surveys, send it to your friends and colleagues and keep track of responses in a single spreadsheet. The form can be created separately from the Docs list or in a Google spreadsheet. After you have completed making the form you can either email it to the prospective respondents or embed it in your blog / website. When the respondents fill out and submit the form, the response is automatically recorded. The responses received are assimilated in a spreadsheet and can be viewed either in entirety or as a summary. Forms are a very powerful tool and can be used by schools, businesses or by individuals for gathering feedback.

- **Google Drawings**

Google Drawings enable you to easily create, share and edit drawings online. The drawing can be a flow chart, a line diagram or a plain simple drawing. Besides the usual features of sharing and collaborating online with others in real time, a drawing created with Google drawings can be embedded into another Google document, spreadsheet or presentation and minor adjustments can be made inline, within the document.

- **Presentations**

The presentations support the .PPT and .PPS format and you can import or export your presentations in these formats. In addition, the presentations can be downloaded in the TXT format.

As with the other applications you can share, collaborate and view the presentations online with others and also embed the presentations in your blog or website.

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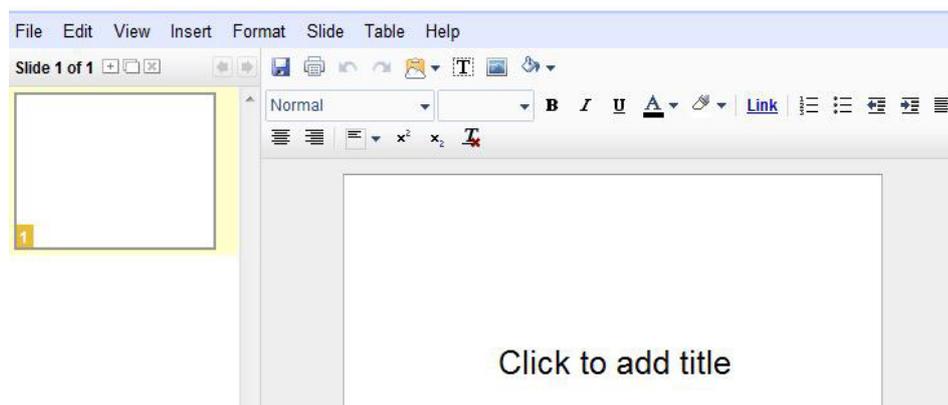


Figure10.4 Google Docs Power Point Presentations Tool Bar

10.4 Google Docs Viewer

Google Docs Viewer is another impressive and helpful application from Google. The Docs Viewer is integrated with Gmail and most of you must have noticed that when you get an attachment in Gmail you are given two options, View and Download. If you choose View, then you are shown the document in Google Docs Viewer.

The Docs Viewer supports 15 types of file formats which includes, besides the commonly used formats, Apple Pages (.PAGES), Adobe Illustrator (.AI), Adobe Photoshop (.PSD), Tagged Image File Format (.TIFF), Autodesk AutoCad (.DXF), Scalable Vector Graphics (.SVG), PostScript (.EPS, .PS), TrueType (.TTF), XML Paper Specification (.XPS) and Archive file types (.ZIP and .RAR).

So next time Windows tells you that it could not find a specific program to open a file type, you can try out Google Docs Viewer.

11 Google Picasa

How many times has it happened that you have saved a photo on your computer and can't find it? How many times have you lost photos because the hard disk was corrupted or you accidentally deleted the folder? It happens with everyone some time or the other. But there is help at hand.

Google Picasa and Picasa Web Albums were developed with the idea of storing photos centrally on the cloud as a secure and safe back up and also to enable sharing of the photos. Picasa is powerful downloadable software, packed with features that help one to find, edit, organize and share all the photos on one's computer. With Picasa Web Albums, you can create online albums to share with others whilst maintaining control over the privacy.

The good thing about Picasa is that the photos are not moved from their location. Picasa just builds up an index and displays all photos in the same place. Another aspect is that when you edit the photos, the original files are not touched and even when you save the edited copy a new file is created, so your original photos will not be tampered with at any time.

11.1 Installing Picasa

Picasa can be downloaded for free at <http://picasa.google.com>. Once you have downloaded the software, you can install Picasa by running the .exe file. Soon after installation on the computer, the software will run an initial scan on your computer for existing images. For this you will be prompted to specify the folders it should scan. Once the scan is completed, Picasa displays all the photos and images that it finds.

Picasa can also be used to import photos from other external drives like your digital camera, scanners, usb device etc. In this case, Picasa will store the photos on the computer.

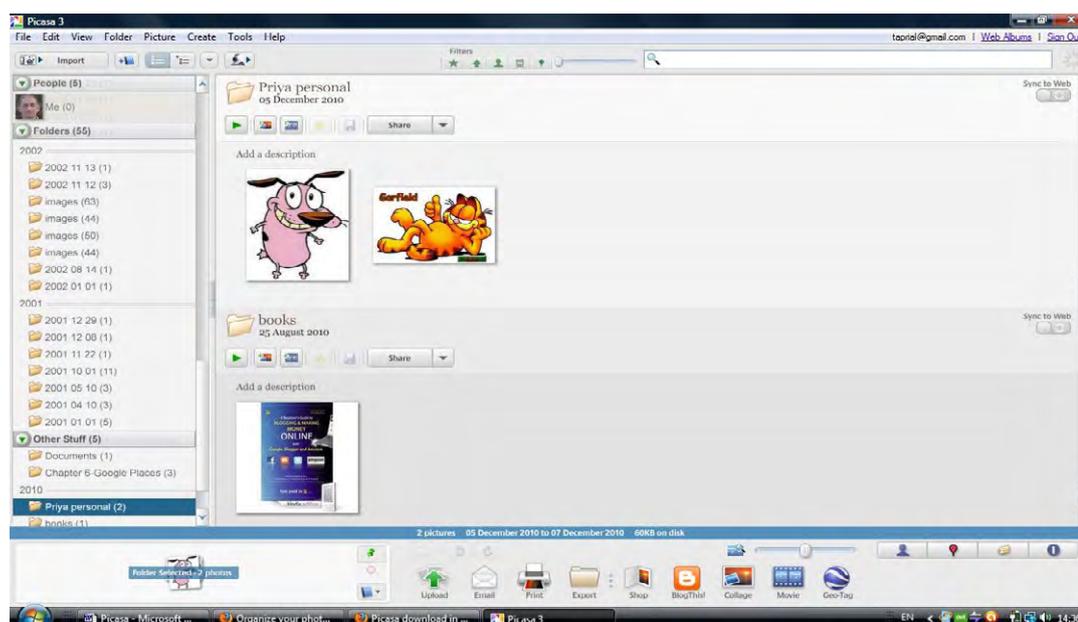


Figure 11.1 Google Picasa on Your Computer

11.2 Organizing the Photos

A screenshot of Google Picasa displaying folders and images is shown in Figure 11.1. The left sidebar is the Picasa hub for organization. The Picasa photos are organized in the following manners:

- **Albums** – Albums only exist on Picasa. That means it is just a kind of directory for the photos, which exist on your computer. The albums are displaying these photos without actually moving them. If you delete a photo from an album within Picasa nothing happens to the original.
- **People** – The photos on your computer can be organized according to the people present in the photos. Picasa has a built-in facial recognition technology, which tries to group photos with similar faces across the collection. Just like albums this is a virtual grouping and changes made here do not affect the original photos.
- **Folders** – The items in **Folders** are representing the actual folders on your computer. Any changes made here will affect the original folders, so you need to be careful working with these.
- **Projects and others** – Your screenshots and downloads will be shown as Projects or Others in the organization bar.

11.3 Editing Photos

Picasa offers basic editing tools for making your photos look better. These include tools like cropping, straightening, retouching etc, tools for adjusting colours highlights, shadows, etc and tools for generating effects like sharpen, tint, warmify and convert to black & white or sepia.

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11.4 Sharing Photos

Photos can be shared in two ways. Firstly, by uploading selected photos or complete albums to Picasa Web albums and secondly by emailing the photos. Emailing may not be better option to share a large number of photos since most service providers have restriction on the amount of data, which can be attached.

11.5 Additional Features

There are certain additional features provided to make your Picasa experience even better.

- **Taking backups** – Picasa can be used to backup your photo collection on an external drive or CD/DVD.
- **Resizing Photos** – Photos in Picasa can be resized while being exported. If you click the export button, the option to resize photos is given. You can select the desired pixels and export the photo. You can even watermark the photo if so required.
- **Adding Captions** – Adding captions make the viewing experience even better. You can add captions to all photos while editing them.
- **Adding Tags** – Tags can be added to photos so that it is easy to find them if your collection becomes very large. For example, you can tag by an event or by a place you visited.
- **Printing Photos** – If you have a printer you can also print photos directly from Picasa by using the print option. If you do not have a printer or require a high quality print, you can use the Shop option and choose a vendor from the displayed list to order prints for your photos. Please note that you will need an existing account or register for a new account with the vendor you select. Once you place the order, Picasa transfers the selected photos to the vendor who in turn completes your order.
- **Making a Collage or Video** – Making a collage or a movie using your photographs is possible with Picasa, with a click of a button. Picasa also has an option for uploading the movie or video you make directly to You Tube.
- **Publish it on Blogger** – If you are maintaining a Blogger blog, you can post your photos on to your blog directly from Picasa by using the “BlogThis” button.

11.6 Picasa Web Albums

Picasa Web Albums provides 1GB of free space to registered users. After you have uploaded the photos you can share the photos or albums with others. For sharing the albums there is the conventional way of selecting the album and then notifying your friends by email and then there is the sharing of albums via Google+. If you have a Google+ account, you can post the photos or albums to your account and share them by selecting your circles, individuals or email addresses. People in your circles will see the photos in their stream, and the others will get an email notification. Note that people invited by you but not registered for Google+ can still see the photographs without signing up.

If you'd rather not use Google+ to share your photos, there is a link “Share via email only” at the bottom of the share window.

11.7 Privacy Settings

Since the photos are available on the web you need to be careful about setting the privacy options according to your requirements. The available options are:

- **Public** – Anyone on the web can see your photos and the photos will even be searchable and be linked to your Google profile.
- **Limited, Anyone with a Link** – When you send a link of your albums to your friends it contains an authorization key, which will not be available to anyone else, and hence only the people who have the exact link are able to see the albums.
- **Limited** – These albums are visible to only those people that you specify and even they need to sign in with their Google accounts to see the albums. However, Google+ users need to know that other Google+ users that you share albums with automatically have the permission to re-share your albums amongst their circles.
- **Only You** – This is the highest level of privacy and no one can see the albums other than you. If back up of your photos is the only reason for you uploading your photos on Picasa Web Albums, this is the privacy level for you.

11.8 Syncing to Web

Now that you have photos and albums in two places i.e. Picasa on your computer and Picasa Web Albums online, you need a way to manage your online albums from your computer. Picasa has “*Sync to Web*” feature, which allows you to do that with minimal effort.

When you *Sync to web*, the albums on your computer and web are synchronised and updated with respect to photo edits, addition/deletion, captions/tags/geotags and the order of the photos in the albums. This feature obviates the necessity to be online while managing your albums and also the need to make changes at two places.

12 Google Picnik

Picnik is a powerful and interesting photo-editing software, which is totally web based. Traditionally, photo-editing software have been expensive and needed to be hosted on your computer. Picnik has changed all that. Now you can edit your photos from your web browser.

Picnik is probably one of the best cloud based photo editing web application that is available in free and paid versions. If it is only one photo you want to try out or edit, you don't even need to register. With a free registered account you can upload up to five photos at a time. The free version has almost everything an average user needs and unless you want to get totally professional you don't need to go for the premium version. However, the good part is that you can try all the premium features without having to pay for it; only, you won't be able to save these changes.

Picnik is simple to use and ideal for beginners. The user-friendly interface coupled with easy navigation is the highlight of the application. You can use Picnik to edit photos, touch them up, create effects and also add text and stickers.

Picnik allows you to either upload photos from your computer or get it from anywhere on the web including Picasa, Flickr, Photobucket and Facebook. It is seamlessly integrated with these websites and it is easy to upload your edited works back on them.

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Figure 12.1 Screenshot of Google Picnik in The Edit Page

With Picnik, not only can you edit photos but also make collages, slideshows, print your pictures and even order the prints on mugs, calendars etc. There are a variety of tools available to personalize, improve and transform your photos.

The basic editing functions include cropping, rotating, resizing, adjustment of exposure, colours and sharpness. Then there are multiple effects, which are categorized by *Basics*, *Camera*, *Colour*, *Area*, *Artistic* and *Misc*. There are many effects available and you can really play around with these to make your photos look stunning. There is an option of selectively applying effects to just a specific part of the photos. Moreover, each tool in Picnik has a slider for you to fine tune the effect you are trying to get in your photo. You can adjust the hardness, brush size and strength with the slider.

Another feature is the embellishment of your photos with text of various fonts and sizes. A huge number of resizable stickers are available which can be included in the photos to make them look interesting and personalized. Finally, there are borders and frames to give the finish to the photo.

The history feature is a handy tool, which stores all the photos edited and saved with Picnik, allowing one to go back anytime to undo the changes and modify them, as per need. This allows the user to be carefree with his photos and actually enjoy the experience and let his/her creativity and imagination go wild.

Picnik is the primary photo editor in Picasa Web albums and Flickr and you have the option of editing your photos without leaving the websites. For Facebook, an App is available which can be launched to edit the photo with Picnik.

Working with Picnik is not only easy but also enjoyable. The import and export of photos is simple and despite it being a web application, the speed is fantastic. It is by no means comparable to professional photo-editing software like Adobe Photoshop, but for a free web based tool, Picnik is the best.

Section III: Social Networking

13 Google Plus

Google+, pronounced and sometimes written as Google Plus or abbreviated as G+, is the social networking service launched by Google in Jun 2011. Google Plus is actually the latest in the series of Social Networking services launched by Google. Before this there was Orkut, Buzz, Wave and Lively. However, none of the services had a global impact. Google Plus as a networking service is probably the best, which has come out of the Google stable so far. Such was the interest and expectations from the service that it attracted 20 million users within the first three weeks of its launch, the fastest by any social network till date.

Social Networking websites like Facebook, MySpace and Friendster have existed for many years and have a tremendous following. Facebook is the current leader with about 750 Million users. Almost all of us have used one of these services at some time or the other to preclude a discussion on what Social Networking Sites are. So we can straightaway jump to what Google + brings to the table.

13.1 What is Different

Two concepts make Google+ different from other Social Networking sites. The first is that Google+ insists on a real name and identity of a user unlike other sites, which allow pseudonyms, and fake identities. The underlying philosophy is that people behave better online when their true identities are known. We will not get into the pros and cons of this but this may mean a world of respite for users who have been harassed, blackmailed or generally drowned out in spam. It also makes it possible for users to know exactly whom they are adding to their network.

The second conceptual difference is that Google+ recognizes that a person is not the same to every one else and does behave differently with different people and in different circumstances. Therefore, a system has been introduced which allows the users to decide what level of social interaction they want with different people. This gets the online interaction closer to the real-life interaction we have with others, by allowing us to selectively share things with different groups of people.

13.2 The Basic Structure

- **Circles**

At the heart of Google+ are Circles, which are a way of organizing your contacts into groups for sharing purposes. Circles are a subset of your online contacts, which contain only those people you add to the particular circle. So you can create circles for family, friends, business associates, colleagues etc. You can share stuff with all your circles or select any one or more of them, making sure you are sharing relevant content with the right people.

When you share something with specific circles, contacts in your other circles do not get to see it. So if you share your child's school performance with family, your friends, colleagues etc will not get to see it, thus lending more privacy and flexibility to your online presence.

You can also customize your personal profile for circles, making only selective information visible to contacts in different circles. So your contact details can be visible to your close friends and family but not to your other circles.

- **Stream**

The Stream is where you see all the updates from the various contacts in your various circles. This is where the users also enter their own status updates or share photos, videos, etc. Users can filter the stream by Circles, which will then show them only updates from contacts in that circle.

- **Sparks**

Sparks allow the user to specify his interests and then helps the user to find and share articles, videos, images etc on the subjects. This is something like a Reader we discussed earlier in the book, and you will always have something new to read about things you are interested in.

- **Hangouts**

This is the online version of unplanned meets in the real life. Hangouts are virtual video chat rooms, which can be accessed anytime. So when you are free you can let your friends know that you are hanging out and they can join you for a face-to-face video chat. This is a much less intrusive way of letting people know that you are interested in spending some time chatting, than starting an unsolicited chat with a person at a time when he might be staring into a Eureka moment. With Hangouts you are inviting people and not forcing them into a conversation.

- **Huddles**

Huddles is a mobile application offering group chat feature. With Huddles, when you are coordinating with a group of people, you don't need to send repeat messages to multiple people to get everyone on the same page. Huddles turns the conversation into a single group chat and is a great feature for discussions. It saves you a bunch of time and effort having to contact people individually.

- **Instant Upload**

Photos happen to be the most shared stuff on the social networking websites. With Google+ instant upload feature, the photos you take with your mobile phone automatically get uploaded online. Please note that you can also upload and share photos from your computer or your stream in the conventional manner.

13.3 Why Use Google+

Google has created an ecosystem of sorts and has multiple applications and services vying for your attention. Most of these services are integrated with each other and you do not have to successively login and logout to access your data. When you are signed into Google for one of the many things you might be using, the Google bar on top automatically keeps updating you about the activity in your Google+ account. This saves you a lot of time and keeps you updated in real-time.

Google is one of the most trusted brands in the online space, has a strong privacy policy and assures a high degree of data security. Google's endeavours towards insisting on real identities and the ease of removal of personal information reiterate its commitment towards transparency.

Google+ has better apps for mobile than any other social networking website. As things stand, more and more people are using mobiles for online activities.

Finding contacts and managing the conversation with them is far more easy and efficient with Google+.

You are not forced to follow people on Google+. If someone wants to follow you, he/she can do so without your approval. This is hardly a privacy concern since they will not be able to see your posts unless you have made it public or shared it with the 'following' circle. In any case, you can see the list of people following you and can block any person from seeing your posts.

Google has taken the transparency and free will to a new level by letting the users have full control over their personal data. An interface under the heading *Data Liberation* provides the users the ability to download all their data, *anytime* they want and even *hide* or *delete* this data permanently. This is totally unlike other services, which are reluctant to allow users to delete their accounts permanently.

In conclusion, we can say that Google+ is a powerful and efficient tool, which takes online networking closer to real life social networking. Google has a large bouquet of services and a huge user base, which makes the prospect of Google+ becoming a necessity in the coming days. Leave it out at your own risk.

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