



Bamboo—the new research tool for academics, lawyers and journalists

Being able to make unexpected associations and connections can be the essence of true discovery as academics, lawyers and journalists know. Now thanks to Bamboo, the new probabilistic information retrieval system by Lemur Consulting, the chances of finding what you're looking for or even discovering things you weren't even aware of have increased massively.

Bamboo is designed for large databases on a PC or the web. It has been developed working alongside historians and anthropologists who have needed powerful, intuitive, software and uses a combination of relational (Boolean) retrieval with the powerful system of probabilistic (Bayesian) retrieval developed in Cambridge in the late 1970's.

Bamboo is available for Windows, Linux and Macintosh platforms and

is controlled by a standard web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Netscape or Mozilla Firefox) so is easy to learn and user-friendly. Data is held in a highly compressed and efficient form and may be input and output as industry-standard XML. It manages multimedia including text, images, audio and video. Searching is very fast and intuitive and Bamboo can run on a server, allowing many users to access the data at once using web browsers.

Bamboo allows a search query to be any shape or pattern of words and this flexibility combined with the chances of Bamboo finding a number of other interesting records on the same theme makes it an excellent research tool. Professor Alan Macfarlane of the University of Cambridge uses Bamboo as the search engine for a number of academic databases:

"I had always sensed that half-forgotten treasures were in my material, gathered over a long period. But like a squirrel's nuts buried in autumn, their location was half forgotten. ... Only a small part of what was relevant would be found under the specific heading under which, twenty years ago, I would have decided to put it."



"Now, thanks to a powerful, statistical, machine, all sorts of unexpected connections can be made to refresh the mind and stimulate the imagination."

www.bambootechnology.com

Home alone

Lemur's working practices have become the focus of study at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cambridge. Since its incorporation in 2001, Lemur consultants and software developers have all worked from home, communicating via email and Internet chat, with teleconferencing using VOIP (telephone calls carried over the Internet). Customers call a 'virtual' phone number which can be set to call any of the consultants' home numbers or even a mobile phone. A web-based 'virtual office', built using collaborative software, allows Lemur staff to communicate ideas, manage customer records, contact information, and maintain schedules and on-line diaries. Staff can access the virtual office using any web browser and even via a mobile phone with Internet capability. "Although the virtual phone number costs a small amount, it's far cheaper than a 'real' phone line," says Mr Hull. "The teleconferencing and chat between us uses free software and doesn't cost us any more than the usual charges for a broadband connection." Lemur is able to pass these cost savings onto clients.

This form of distributed working is becoming increasingly popular in certain sectors hence the Cambridge study, which has highlighted benefits including a higher focus on efficiency and productivity, more flexible working hours and significant cost reduction. According to Dr. Brendan Burchell, Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences; "Lemur is an excellent example of how Cambridge IT firms innovate with the very latest communication technologies, to maximise both efficiency for their customers and the quality of life for their employees."

Open Source "we work for you"

As the dust has settled on the General Election, MPs old and new are back to business as usual. To find out what exactly they are doing, you can visit www.theyworkforyou.com, a voluntarily managed website reporting on the work of members of our government. It is an impressive website with powerful search facilities able to retrieve information on particular MPs, or speeches on particular subjects. The search facility is powered by Xpian, an open source information retrieval system. Lemur Consulting provide commercial support for the Xpian project.

About Lemur

Lemur offers expert systems advice and customised information retrieval software. As search engine specialists, we can:

- Provide your website or intranet with a high performance search engine
- Offer multimedia database solutions with probabilistic search and XML editing facilities
- Produce information retrieval software for specific purposes; such as building tools that will display data in graphical form, or sort documents automatically.

Lemur also provides general expertise and development in technologies such as Java, C++, Linux, Windows and XML. "We promise to explain ourselves in a clear and jargon free manner, giving you accurate and honest advice."