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# Thinking about Evaluation in Today's Information Access World

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*ABSTRACT. If we could look back 50 years, we would see an extremely limited information access environment. Information could only be found using librarians who supplemented their knowledge using manually-produced indexes (for some fields), or possibly via one's colleagues. Cyril Cleverdon from Cranfield England conducted research on indexing methodologies in the early 1960s, resulting in the proof that manual indexing was NOT needed; he also developed an evaluation methodology that was quickly adopted by the information retrieval community. Nevertheless, information access remained restricted throughout the 70s and 80s due to lack of computer power and equally important, lack of information in electronic form.*

*By the early 1990s the computers were finally powerful enough and there was reasonable amounts of text in electronic form. TREC in 1992 showed that the ranking algorithms developed in the 60s and 70s actually scaled up to handle large amounts of full-text documents. The Internet (1990) and the new search engines such Excite, Altavista, and Google came along, finally allowing end users decent search capability. Web sites exploded with content, blogging and twittering started, and the information access world was suddenly vast, including multimedia, e-commerce sites, online encyclopedias, huge archives of scanned material, etc.*

*This talk will address how the evaluation technologies developed back in the 60s have adapted, where possible, to today's world and discuss how evaluation is being done by the search engine companies. Additionally we will look at ways evaluation could be developed to enhance the full information access spectrum beyond the traditional information retrieval paradigm.*

*KEYWORDS: Information retrieval, Evaluation, TREC.*

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