

July 2009 Newsletter

If you are receiving this message, it means that I have done work for you in the past, I am doing work for you now, or you have expressed interest regarding me doing work for you in the future. If you would prefer to not receive further emails, please let me know about it.

Being that it is now July, I normally would be sending out invoices to any of you for whom I have done work in June, or for those who have not yet paid for previous months. Well, it was kinda quiet in June and now, suddenly, I am pretty busy so I am not going to be sending out invoices this month. As a result, if I did work for you in June, you have a bit of a reprieve. If you have not yet paid for previous months, you have an even bigger reprieve. The next set of invoices should be going out on or around the first of August.

News & Info

A Little Late – This is somewhat later than I usually send out my newsletters, and it is due to a combination of things happening, all around the beginning of this month. Hopefully I will have something going out earlier next month.

New Search (Decision) Engine – Microsoft has introduced their own entry in the search engine field. They call it “Bing” (www.bing.com) and their claim that it is a “decision” versus “search” engine is something you may have already seen in their latest commercials, which are pretty amusing, actually. I have tried it and, to be honest, I do not see much difference and it remains to be seen what kind of a dent it will make on the Googles, Yahoos and various other players in the search game.

CAPTCHA (and Re-CAPTCHA) – If you have signed on, subscribed to or joined anything recently, you have probably dealt with this feature. It is actually an acronym (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart), and requires you to re-enter characters that have been distorted to prove that you are a person and not some automated computer software. And if you have done it lately, you may have had to enter 2 words. There is an interesting (at least I think it is, you may feel differently...) story behind this.

Currently, Carnegie Mellon University is in the process of digitizing numerous types of printed media. I will copy here info from their website:

reCAPTCHA is a free CAPTCHA service that helps to digitize books, newspapers and old time radio shows. Check out [our paper](#) in Science about it (or read more below).

A [CAPTCHA](#) is a program that can tell whether its user is a human or a computer. You've probably seen them — colorful images with distorted text at the bottom of Web registration forms. CAPTCHAs are used by many websites to prevent abuse from "bots," or automated programs usually written to generate spam. No computer program can read distorted text as well as humans can, so bots cannot navigate sites protected by CAPTCHAs.

About 200 million CAPTCHAs are solved by humans around the world every day. In each case, roughly ten seconds of human time are being spent. Individually, that's not a lot of time, but in aggregate these little puzzles consume more than 150,000 hours of work each day. What if we could make positive use of this human effort? reCAPTCHA does exactly that by channeling the effort spent solving CAPTCHAs online into "reading" books.

To archive human knowledge and to make information more accessible to the world, multiple projects are currently digitizing physical books that were written before the computer age. The book pages are being photographically scanned, and then transformed into text using "Optical Character Recognition" (OCR). The transformation into text is useful because scanning a book produces images, which are difficult to store on small devices, expensive to download, and cannot be searched. The problem is that OCR is not perfect.

reCAPTCHA improves the process of digitizing books by sending words that cannot be read by computers to the Web in the form of CAPTCHAs for humans to decipher. More specifically, each word that cannot be read correctly by OCR is placed on an image and used as a CAPTCHA. This is possible because most OCR programs alert you when a word cannot be read correctly.

But if a computer can't read such a CAPTCHA, how does the system know the correct answer to the puzzle? Here's how: Each new word that cannot be read correctly by OCR is given to a user in conjunction with another word for which the answer is already known. The user is then asked to read both words. If they solve the one for which the answer is known, the system assumes their answer is correct for the new one. The system then gives the new image to a number of other people to determine, with higher confidence, whether the original answer was correct.

So, if you have submitted any of these, you are helping with this admirable project. Pretty cool, don't you think?

Clients & Affiliates

(In this section, those of you who would like to can place ads, tips, references, etc. If you have something you would like to submit, please email me and I will get it in the next newsletter.)

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Search Engine Placement – For most people, getting on the first page of the search engines is the goal. There is another company here in San Diego that has been a leader in internet marketing strategies and search engine optimization services for over eight years. Go to www.topimresults.com and you can, at the very least, get a free Website Marketing Analysis and a free Position Rank Report.

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Thank you all for your business (and potential business...)

Jim