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Carry on up the Internet: Sitemaps get you found

Spike Milligan: Policemen are numbered in case they get lost.

(The Goon Show: The Last Goon Show of All, 1972)

I couldn't come up with a suitable (or should that be unsuitable?) quote from the Carry on Film's for this post, so I hope you'll forgive me for picking one from the Goons instead.

Last time in **Carry on up the Internet: A bit of an Enigma** I talked about how the club's web site had managed to knock itself out of Google and other search engines using a robots.txt file. Having corrected the problem, they could have sat back and waited for the search engines to add them back in. With a bit of luck they'd be picked up in about a month. They asked if there was any way to speed this up.

In the early days of the web, you could submit yourself to search engines and listings sites (we used to run a service some of you may remember called Signpost that helped you do that). Submitting to search engine and directory sites fell out of favour for a few years.

In the last few years the biggest search engines have brought in a new way to let them know about your site. Funnily part of it involves using a robots.txt file on your site. Back in 2005 Google launched, Google Sitemaps, a way to tell Google about the pages on your site. Since then other big name search engines like Yahoo! and Bing have adopted the standard which is now known as XML Sitemaps.

By adding a file to your web site, usually called sitemap.xml, to your site you can tell the search engines about your pages to make it easier for them to find them. You can add a line to a robots.txt file to say where your sitemap file is to make it easy for the search engines spiders to find. While it is possible to write a sitemap file in a text editor there are several web sites and software that will produce one for you. Many content management systems, like **Joomla** and **Liberato**, can automatically make them behind the scenes.

When you update your site you can use websites like **Bing's webmaster tools (link opens new window)**, **Yahoo! Site Explorer (link opens new window)** and **Google's webmaster tools (link opens new window)**. If you're using a content management system, it can send a ping to the search engines to automatically let them know whenever your site changes.

So rather than sitting back and waiting for the search engines to come to you, you can proactively go out there and tell the search engines about your site.

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