

Internet as a source of information for laboratory managers

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After years of enthusiasm about world wide web and e-commerce, it is time for a realistic view of the actual situation, the possibilities and also the problems of the internet as an information tool for laboratory managers and staff.

Many independent scientific portals and online marketplaces were recently closed or merged because the re-financing of web pages is nearly impossible. It only works for database hosts like STN and DIALOG or scientific publishing houses which sell the access to their journals via web browser.

The main problem of information retrieval via internet is the information chaos: there are billions of interesting sources, but it exists no search engine for the whole web. Another problem is the fact, that the origin and reliability of information is often unknown in contradiction to the content of commercial databases.

Nevertheless the internet has grown to the largest and easiest to access library in the last few years and no end of this process is in sight. There is a lot of useful information, but its retrieval is very time-consuming in the global jungle of information.

This lecture gives a survey of the status quo and shows some examples where the internet has established in the laboratory. It also gives some tips for a more efficient use of search engines and compares their efficiency as well as their limits. More than 99% of all internet sources are not accessible with the search engines. Therefore it is often better to know specialised pages, search engines and databases to improve the results of web searches substantially.

Finally a list of some of the best web portals and entry points for laboratory people is given.