



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

In June of 2009, Lone Wolf launched a suite of new Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tools to help our clients navigate the process of web marketing. These new tools give extensive control over many areas of your website which are relevant to your effective ranking in search engines. For example; if you were to do a Google® search on your Company Name – does your Company website appear on the first page of the list of results found?

This information is intended to supplement those tools by providing an explanation of why these tools are important, what options are available for you to improve your SEO beyond these tools, and to dispel some myths and rumors about SEO.

Contents:

An explanation of the SEO Title	2
An explanation of META tags	3
Using the new SEO Tools – the WHY?	4
The URL	6
The Sitemap	7
Going Beyond Your Site	8
SEO Glossary	10



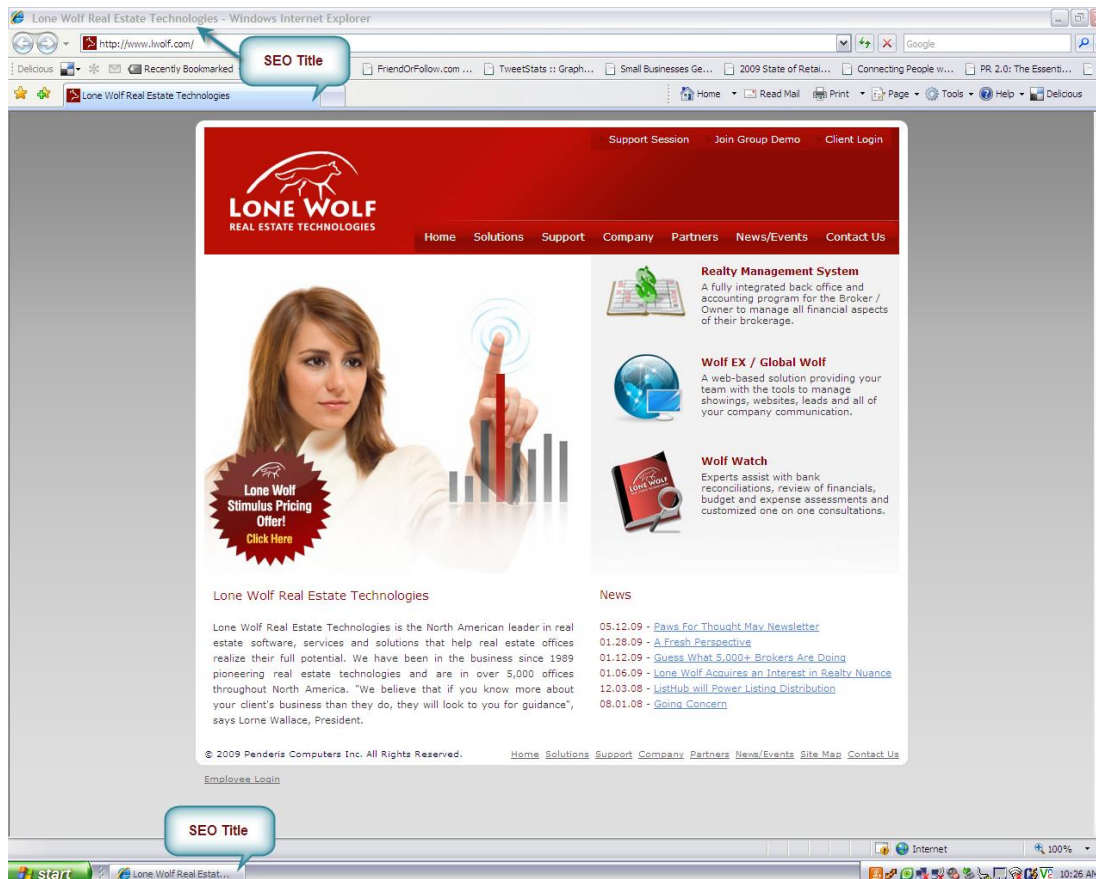
SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

An explanation of the SEO Title

To explain the tools it is important to understand what Title and Meta Tags are. If you already have a firm grasp on these elements you can move past this section.

Title and Meta Tags are a collection of information that is provided to web browsers and search engines generally not seen by the average end user. The first of these, the TITLE tag is used by most web browsers to put text into the bar at the very top of the web browser as well as to identify the site when a user adds it to their favorites. Many search engines, including the major ones like Google and Yahoo, see this title as some of the most important text on your website.

Here is an example of SEO Title. You will notice that title populates in three spots on your screen.





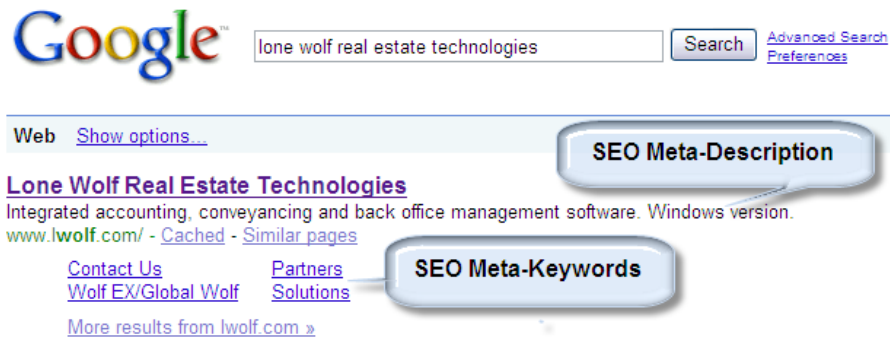
SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

An explanation of META tags

The second type of tag, the META tag is a collection of notes for web browsers and search engines about how the information on your web page should be read, what special relevance it might have, and bibliographical information (author, date, etc.). Some of this information is very important for proper SEO, some of it is useful for SEO, and some of it is strictly outdated. At the end of this document is a reference that explains the choices Lone Wolf has made with these meta tags.

Two of these META tags receive special attention and are available to be edited in the new SEO tools – keywords and description. Keywords are a collection of the most relevant words to describe your webpage. For Lone Wolf clients these words often include Real Estate; House; Home; Residential; Commercial; Property; and other similar terms. Description is a brief paragraph which describes the content of the current web page, which might be something like 'Real Estate Company provides listings of residential and commercial properties for sale in the Geographical area. Search for home and business opportunities with our quick and easy to use property browsing features.


For example:



We have included this option realizing that certain search engines may or may not use these fields.

SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

Using the new SEO Tools – the WHY?

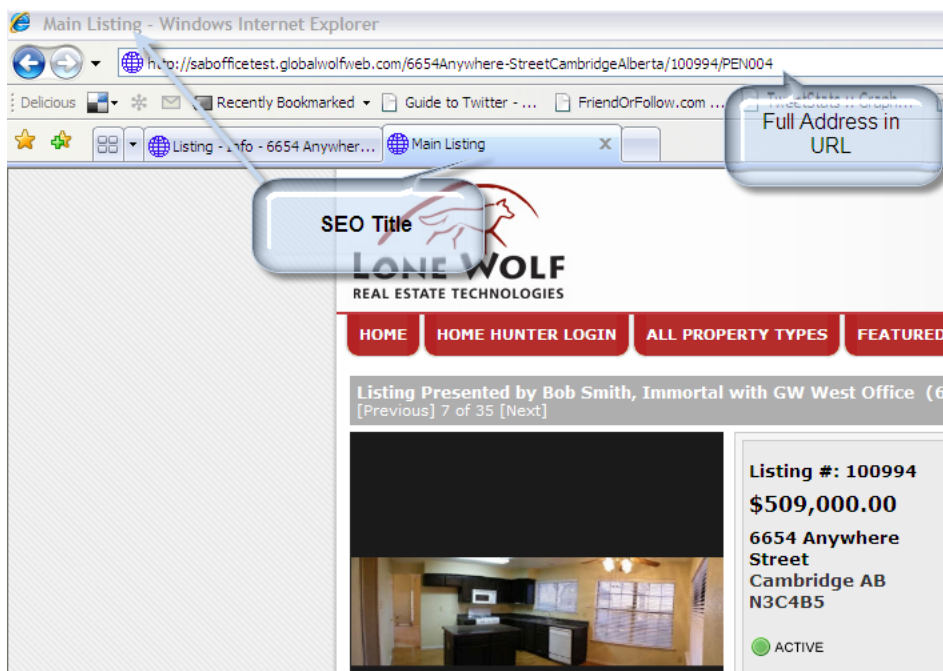
A reference on the new SEO Tools, as well as all the tools in the Extranet, can be found in the Help menu. As well, when using the SEO Tools we added convenient  help icons providing quick information to help you understand the information should be entered into which field. This document is going to focus on the reason and results of SEO rather than the process.

a) The Title

The title of your web page should be a clean and concise description of your page's content – including any relevant keywords you want the page to be found under in the search engines. It is important to remember with the title that it is not used by the search engines alone, but is also a description for your clients. For this reason it is important that it not be just a jumble of keywords but a readable description.

You may have noticed that since the new tools were added, the title for every **listing** that appears on your website includes the full address of the property (unless your MLS or site rules restrict the display of this information, in which case only broad geographical information is included). This provides important geographical keywords to the search engines while also providing a clean heading for the user.

For example:



The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying a real estate listing page. The address bar contains the URL: <http://sabofficetest.globalwolfweb.com/6654Anywhere-StreetCambridgeAlberta/100994/PEN004>. The browser tabs show 'Listing - Info - 6654 Anywhere...' and 'Main Listing'. The page content includes the Lone Wolf Real Estate Technologies logo, navigation buttons for 'HOME', 'HOME HUNTER LOGIN', 'ALL PROPERTY TYPES', and 'FEATURED'. Below the navigation is a listing header: 'Listing Presented by Bob Smith, Immortal with GW West Office (61 [Previous] 7 of 35 [Next])'. The main listing area features a photo of a kitchen and a sidebar with the following details: Listing #: 100994, Price: \$509,000.00, Address: 6654 Anywhere Street, Cambridge AB N3C4B5, and a status indicator 'ACTIVE' with a green dot.



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

As noted earlier, major search engines such as Google and Yahoo consider the text in your title to be one of the most important features of your site for determining its relevance. For this reason it should be your first consideration when taking a look at the SEO of your website.

b) The Description

The description tag of your website is an extension on the title. It can be thought of like the abstract for an article in a magazine. This text is used by some search engines to provide a quick snippet of what your website is about and all major search engines give at least some purpose to this information.

Because a number of search engines, including Google, may display portions of your description to the end user it remains important that the text here be easy to read. Few search engines use this area to find keywords to search your site by and so it is not critical to drop keywords into this area. Many web marketing firms recommend this as a call to action field using such terms as 'Visit our website...' or 'Browse our listings...' to draw your clients to the site.

c) The Keywords

I am including this field next in our SEO document not because of its importance but because of the emphasis so often placed on it. In the early world wide web this field was the most important piece of information for search engines, providing them with a quick place to look for a list of relevant words to the website.

However, this data rapidly became misused by company's misrepresenting their websites in their keyword field, providing information that was either misleading or blatantly false about the website content. **For this reason no major search engine and only a small handful of specialized search engines reference this field.**

However, like everything in the world of the internet, given time to improve upon their search methods it is conceivable that search engines may start referring to this field again in the future once they have a way to verify its content and so we have left it included in our SEO Tools but do not require content in it when setting your SEO fields.

Please ensure that any keywords you enter in our SEO Manager are words that are used on the particular page.



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

d) The Content

After the TITLE, the next place search engines look to determine keywords for your website is in the text that appears on your site. If you are looking to place your website for key terms they should be mentioned, when possible, within the body of the site. There are three simple guidelines to follow when writing content for your website with SEO in mind.

- i) Repeat important key words and phrases twice or three times – repeating them more often than this will result in search engines considering the keywords to be spammed (i.e. not truly relevant to the content but repeated over and over again to try and trick the search engine – current search algorithms do not fall for this)
- ii) All text should be visible to the user – though it is possible to use the text editor to put white text on your page to include additional keywords that your user does not see, but the search engines do, current search algorithms are designed to ignore such invisible text
- iii) Do not sacrifice your users for the search engines – while writing content for SEO, remember that the search engine is only a tool to get the client to your site, if they reach your site and then leave because your content only makes sense to the search engine your SEO is successful, but your site is not

The URL

A tool that Lone Wolf has offered for some time, and is expanded on in the new SEO Tools is URL Translation. URL Translation is important to provide what is referred to as 'Clean URL'. A Clean URL is one that does not contain a ? (or query string) or contains very little information after the ? (a brief query string).

Historically, search engines have had difficulty with dirty URLs and they still run more efficiently with a website that has clean URLs. With URL Translation you can turn the URL:

<http://www.mydomain.com/infotopic.asp?InfoID=3756>

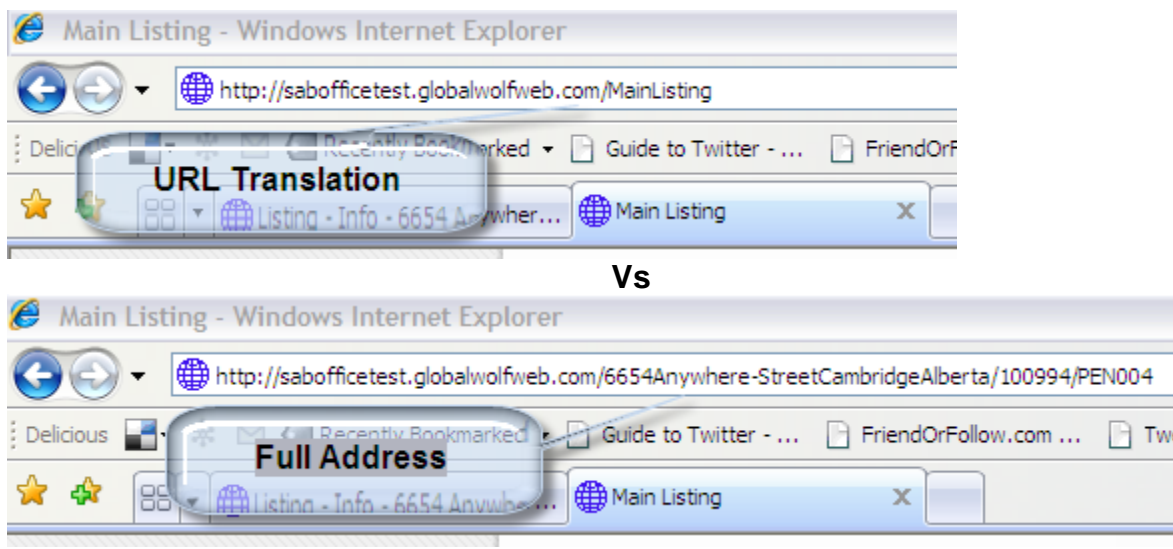
into:

<http://www.mydomain.com/why-use-a-realtor>

SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

The latter is clearly more readable by your end user and also provides some additional information for search engines. The degree to which search engines search your URL for keywords varies, but there is no harm in improving the keyword value of this area. Lone Wolf has already modified all listings to use clean URLs that contain the address (where allowed), geographical information and MLS Number.

For example – the previous example with a URL Translation added:



The Sitemap

Search engine crawlers have 2 ways to find their way through a website. The first way is to follow all the links they come to on the website. This method allows them to travel through a website in the same way that a user will, travelling from page to page in a methodical fashion. The problem with this process is that it is not the most efficient path through your site in many cases and it also causes them to follow links that may leave your site and become distracted indexing another website.

The sitemap (located on all Lone Wolf sites at [sitemap.xml](#)) gives the search engine a list of all the major pages of your site, allowing the Search Engine to go through your pages in the order it determines to be most efficient and helping it to avoid links that leave your site. When combined with the robots.txt file this can also help it to avoid looking at pages that have no search relevance (either because they have no text or because they are intended for your Agents or Staff)



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

Going Beyond Your Site

Now that you understand how to get the search engines to properly recognize your site, and understand what your site is about the important process of getting your site to appear high on the search engine lists begins. Unfortunately there is no magical process for this, and even worse there are many company's selling magical solutions. Magical solutions either involve:

- a) **paid placement** - which the major search engines do not support, so you are buying higher placement on lesser used search engines
- b) **exploiting the search engine's system** – which may improve placement in the short term, but will eventually result in the banning of your site for violation of the search engine's terms of use
- c) **link farming** – which produces minimal results as the search engines quickly learn to ignore links from link farms
- d) **traffic boosting** – which offers thousands of visits to your site, tracking on which has determined that they are not true visitors but automated machine hits to your site to imitate increased traffic

It is important to avoid any offer that suggests front page placement on search engines or increased traffic as a guaranteed result – the nature of the website is such that these guarantees cannot be fulfilled. There are two main directions to take when attempting to improve the effectiveness of your website after completing your SEO work on the site itself.

Step 1: Cross Marketing

Make sure that your website appears in all your marketing materials. Particularly in the field of real estate traffic to your website can be substantially increased through your existing marketing as much of your traffic will be from users already within the demographic of existing marketing with your website providing an avenue to get more information to clients who have seen your advertisements.

Step 2: Link Campaigns

While link farms (sites that have no purpose other than to link to websites) should be avoided, links from relevant websites are of critical importance to your search engine results. If you can arrange to have links to your website from other websites which are relevant to the real estate market (home improvement, home builders, other brokers/brokerages/agents outside your market) it can greatly enhance your search



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

engine ranking. When setting up these links with other websites try to make sure that the text of your link is not just your company name or just your website address, but also includes keywords about real estate.

Step 3: Google Webmaster and Google Analytics

Google, one of the major search engines, provides some of the most helpful tools for doing search engine optimization (specifically for their search engine) and also for tracking the effectiveness of your website (across all traffic).

We strongly recommend that you sign up for both a Google Webmaster and a Google Analytics account – these are free and will both use a single Google Account to access them. Google Webmaster will allow you to give instruction to Google about what sort of indexing to perform on certain pages and allow you to track your sites ranking on Google.

Google Analytics allows you to track what pages of your site are bringing traffic into your site, and what pages users wind up on when viewing your site, allowing you to better understand the way people use your website. Both these accounts will need to be recorded within the Web Manager.



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

SEO Glossary

301 Redirect – see Redirect, 301

302 Redirect – see Redirect, 302

404 Page – a 404 page (based on the internet code for page not found – 404) is passed to a web browser or search engine when a requested address does not exist. For proper search engine optimization it is important that any pages that do not exist return a proper 404 message so that the search engines do not spend their time indexing invalid links. It is also necessary that these exist for proper usage of a Google Webmaster account. Lone Wolf's 404 pages redirect to the home page of the website after 5 seconds so that poor links to your site don't leave visitors stranded.

Alias – a second address for the same website or webpage which remains in the browser address bar instead of rewriting to the original address of the website/webpage. An alias is not a redirect or a copy of the file but a second way of addressing the same information. Some sites that appear to be aliases are in fact framed redirects – which are bad for SEO. The way to tell the difference and what a framed redirect is are explained under redirect, framed.

Alt – an abbreviation of alternate – text attached to an image which substitutes for the image when the site is browsed by search engines or by systems for the visually impaired. As search engines are not able to index information in images it is important to include information in this area. Lone Wolf automatically attaches the title assigned to a listing photo as alt text.

Canonicalization – the process of making search engines recognize two addresses for the same site. The main area where this occurs is with <http://www.yourdomain.com> and <http://yourdomain.com>. According to the internet's rules there is no reason that these 2 sites have to be the same, even though in the vast majority of cases they are. For a while, due to the gap in the internet rules, many search engines tracked these two addresses as two separate websites causing the search engine to treat each one as receiving only half the links the site actually received. This issue is no longer a concern as search engines have overcome this deficiency by assuming the two sites are identical unless the information they receive from them is different. The only apparent issue still remaining here is that Yahoo will index the front pages of the sites differently, but the inside pages together.



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

Crawler – see Web Crawler

Directory – a collected list of sites, sometimes with a search algorithm. The primary difference between Directory's and Search Engines is in the form of data collection – directories usually rely on submitted information while search engines rely on Web Crawlers. Also, directories frequently have more specialized search functionality based on categorizing websites. DMOZ is a popular web directory, as is Yahoo – who also have a search engine.

Framed Redirect – see Redirect, Framed

Keywords – relevant words or phrases (no more than 2 words) that you expect your clients to use when searching for your services on the internet. It is important to pages within your website relevant to each of these keywords and for those pages to reference the exact keyword two or three times.

Meta Tag – Author – a tag that indicates the creator of the web page. As all web pages on Lone Wolf sites are generated by our system this tag is set to our company name by default. Only literary and publication specific search engines use this information.

Meta Tag – Content-Type – indicates what character set was used when writing the HTML. iso-8859-1 is one of the industry standards which is utilized by Lone Wolf.

Meta Tag – Content-Language – indicates the default language of the content. Unless a piece of content indicates otherwise, the setting Lone Wolf uses indicates that content is in English.

Meta Tag – Description – a snippet about the web page, like an article abstract, paraphrasing the content of the page. Lone Wolf's SEO Tool allows full editing of this tag on a per web site or a per web page basis and recommends setting this information for each web page.

Meta Tag – Distribution – this tag is not read by most search engines. Its intended purpose is to indicate rules for what regions are allowed to receive the content. The global setting that Lone Wolf uses indicates to the few search engines that use this tag that they are not supposed to limit distribution of the page unless other rules prohibit it.

Meta Tag – ImageToolbar – an instruction to the web browser to indicate if a toolbar should be shown for each image on the page to control its size and resolution. This toolbar does not exist in the current generation of web browsers, but many users have not fully upgraded, so Lone Wolf turns this off on all web pages



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

Meta Tag – Keywords – a series of keywords which presently has little relevance to search engines and no relevance to any of the major search engines. Lone Wolf's SEO Tool allows full editing of this tag on a per web site or a per web page basis and recommends settings this information site wide

Meta Tag – Revisit-After – indicates when a search engine should return to re-index a page. This tag was only ever used by a single search engine in Vancouver, BC, Canada, and they have dropped its usage. However, many SEO company's still push this tag which is not valid. Lone Wolf does not utilize this tag.

Meta Tag – Robots – this meta tag is used to give instruction to search engine crawlers and indexes. It is only needed when a search engine is being told to NOT do something. Except in the extranet Lone Wolf sets this tag to only NOODP (which means No Open Directory Project) – this prevents the Search Engines from pulling the description of your site from the Open Directory Project, in which users can set descriptions that they believe apply to your site. This tag is overridden by settings in the robots.txt file

Redirect – a second address for a website or web page that works by changing the requested address to the true address of the site. This can be done a few different ways as noted below.

Redirect, 301 – this is a permanent redirect and is the correct way for most redirects to occur. It is named like this because 301 is the internet code for a permanent redirect.

Redirect, 302 – this is a temporary redirect. Most often it is used for pages that return random results – such as quote of the day style pages. They are also used during site maintenance windows and new site launches to temporarily provide a warning page. 302 is the internet code for a temporary redirect.

Redirect, Framed – this is a process used by some domain name registration companies to point your website address (www.yourdomain.com) to the server it is located on. This is most commonly used when your website address is set up to point to something other than the front page of the actual hosted site. In a framed redirect a page, called a frame set, is sent to the web browser with a list of websites to load INSIDE the page. Framed redirects send only a single address inside. A framed redirect is easy to recognize – clicking links within the website will not cause the address bar of your browser to change when using framed redirects. These should be avoided as most search engines encounter difficulties when dealing with framed pages, though some have made progress towards fixing these issues. Also, a framed redirect makes it



SEO – Search Engine Optimization Information

difficult for your clients to direct friends and family to specific pages within your site as the only address they have is for the front page.

Robots.txt – a file that gives generic instruction to search engine crawlers to indicate specific sections of a site on which the search engine should not perform some standard activity such as indexing or following links. It also points the search engine to the sitemap. Lone Wolf has set the Robots.txt file to indicate to search engines to not crawl any extranet pages and also directs them to the sitemap file.

Search Engine – a specialized website that includes within it a database of websites on the internet and a process for ranking these websites based on searches conducted by website users. Search engines include Google, Yahoo, Altavista, Ask and Look.

Sitemap File – a file that helps a search engine index a website by giving it directions regarding major pages of the site. The Lone Wolf sitemap file directs the Search Engine to all main pages of your website automatically.

Spider – see Web Crawler

Title – the text that appears in the top bar of a web browser and is commonly used as the link text in search engines. This text is very important to search engines when they are trying to determine the relevance of your site to specific searches.

Web Crawler – a special browser used by search engines. Web Crawlers are automated software that travels the internet – initially by following links on other pages, eventually by following data stored in a database. This browser is used to collect information on websites including content, titles, links and meta tags to build the search engines database.