

Cyber-sleuthing

Seeking—and finding—people online



by Scott Holstad

So, you're going through the old high school or college yearbook and you run across the picture of an old flame. It's been awhile, and you wonder what in the world happened to that person. Where are they living? What are they doing? Well, friends, you asked, and I'm here to tell ya -- turn to the Internet! You'll be surprised (okay, maybe not. We'll see...) at how many resources exist to aid in finding long-lost souls.

First of all, please understand, there is no central infohaus storing every single name and bit of info about every single person. There are, however, several mini-infohauses, and it's quite possible that you'll find who you are searching for. One of the first places to turn is -- in fact, bookmark this Web site -- Four11. The Four11 White Page Directory maintains more than 6 million pages of email and Web addresses for your perusal. It's a great resource to find out if the person you're looking for has an email address or Web page.

At last count, I had more than six email addresses. (Don't ask, it's a long story...) Surprisingly, some search engines weren't able to find a single mention of me. Fortunately, Yahoo! People Search, provides a pretty reliable search engine, not only for email addresses, but for homepages and telephone numbers as well. In all candor, however, Yahoo! relies upon other engines to do much of the dirty work. One of these other engines, called WhoWhere? is really impressive. It indexes more than 9 million email addresses, homepages, telephone numbers, and regular addresses. WhoWhere? found five of my email addresses, which wasn't too shabby compared to some of the others. Another engine Yahoo! relies upon is OKRA. However, while this database of 6 million entries is fast, it is also vast. No matter how I tried to look for myself, I kept getting deluged with every "Scott" known to humankind.

While email addresses are cool, sometimes you just want to find someone's telephone number. Switchboard is a monstrously large directory boasting at least 200 million telephone numbers taken from White Pages around the country. Obviously, unlisted/unpublished numbers generally won't be available, but Switchboard should be more than sufficient to aid you in finding general info. SearchAmerica is another enormous database, with 220 million names and numbers, but it is a fee-based service (25 cents per

page, via major credit card). The [Ultimate White Pages](#) may also be useful.

Another possibility is using an online alumni service for finding old classmates. One service, [ClassMatesOnline](#) indexes more than 15,000 high schools. A second good resource for finding high school classmates is [Reunion Hall](#).

Perhaps you don't want to find a classmate, but an old Army (or Navy or Air Force...) buddy. The [Veteran Archive](#) is a database designed to help people find long-lost servicemen and women. The [American War Library](#) provides information on more than 14 million vets. Another site is [The Lost and Found](#).

Sometimes you may have, oh, "different" reasons for finding someone. (Like when you want dirt on that uninsured driver who rear-ended your new car last week?) At those times, you may wish to pay a small price to [Capital Finders](#). This company performs credit searches and provides you with the results. [OneStop Information](#) also claims to locate people and information at a "reasonable price."

Finally, you may want to try the standard search engines. [Alta Vista](#) was able not only to find numerous references of me, but also one of my father -- who has never even been on the Internet! Looking for that long-lost love (or pal, or enemy, etc.) can be a time-consuming experience. But hopefully, with the aid of these Web services, you'll soon be reunited, sipping espresso and exchanging "hi" groups.

[For hot links to other kinds of search engines, see "[Especially Special Search Engines](#)."]

[Back to Contents](#)