



## An investigation of web crawler behavior: characterization and metrics

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### Abstract

In this paper, we present a characterization study of search-engine crawlers. For the purposes of our work, we use Web-server access logs from five academic sites in three different countries. Based on these logs, we analyze the activity of different crawlers that belong to five search engines: Google, AltaVista, Inktomi, FastSearch and CiteSeer. We compare crawler behavior to the characteristics of the general World-Wide Web traffic and to general characterization studies. We analyze crawler requests to derive insights into the behavior and strategy of crawlers. We propose a set of simple metrics that describe qualitative characteristics of crawler behavior, viz.: a crawler's preference on resources of a particular format, its frequency of visits on a Web site, and the pervasiveness of its visits to a particular site. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first extensive and in depth characterization of search-engine crawlers. Our results and observations provide useful insights into crawler behavior and serve as basis of our ongoing work on the automatic detection of Web crawlers.

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**Keywords:** Web characterization; Crawlers

### 1. Introduction

A *Web crawler* is a program that traverses the hypertext structure of the Web, starting from a ‘seed’ list of hyperdocuments and recursively retrieving documents accessible from that list [7,13,29]. Web crawlers are also referred to as robots, wanderers, or spiders. All major search engines employ powerful crawlers that traverse the Internet continuously, trying to discover and retrieve as many Web pages as possible. More recently, crawler systems have been used also as tools for focused crawling, for shopbot implementation, and for supporting added-value services on the Web (portals, personalized and mobile services, etc.) [14,19,29]. As a consequence, the number and the variety of active robots operating on the Internet increases continuously, resulting to a noticeable impact on WWW traffic and Web-server activity.

In this paper, we seek to characterize the behavior of crawlers that belong to popular Web-search engines. In particular, we investigate statistically various properties of crawler-induced HTTP traffic, such as the distribution of HTTP requests and reply-codes, the type and size of resources sought and retrieved, the distribution of crawler requests across a Web site, the frequency and pattern of crawler re-visits, and the temporal characteristics of crawler activity. We use these analyses to discover, characterize and compare the capabilities of different crawlers regarding their usage of caching, their capability to detect and avoid broken or dead links, their success in discovering Web-site resources, etc. Furthermore, we propose simple metrics that can be used to describe concisely aspects of crawling strategy and to compare basic crawler characteristics. Characterizing crawler activity is important as it enables researchers to: (i) estimate the impact of robots on the workload and performance of Web servers; (ii) investigate the contribution of crawlers to WWW traffic; (iii) discover and compare the strategies employed by different crawlers to reap resources from the Web, and (iv) model the activity of robots to produce synthetic crawler workloads for simulation studies. Finally, characterization can be the basis for the automatic detection of robots.

For the purposes of our study, we focus on the characterization of five crawlers that belong to well-known

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# An Investigation Of Web Crawler Behavior Characterization

**AW Rasmussen**



## **An Investigation Of Web Crawler Behavior Characterization:**

**Performance Evaluation of Computer and Communication Systems. Milestones and Future Challenges** Karin Anna Hummel, Helmut Hlavacs, Wilfried Gansterer, 2011-12-15 This Festschrift volume is published in honor of G nter Haring on the occasion of his emerital celebration and contains invited papers by key researchers in the field of performance evaluation presented at the workshop Performance Evaluation of Computer and Communication Systems Milestones and Future Challenges PERFORM 2010 held in Vienna Austria in October 2010 G nter Haring has dedicated most of his scientific professional life to performance evaluation and the design of distributed systems contributing in particular to the field of workload characterization In addition to his own contributions and leadership in international research projects he is and has been an excellent mentor of young researchers demonstrated by their own brilliant scientific careers The 20 thoroughly refereed papers range from visionary to in depth research papers and are organized in the following topical sections milestones and evolutions trends green ICT and virtual machines modeling mobility and mobile networks communication and computer networks and load balancing analysis and management *Workload Modeling for Computer Systems Performance Evaluation* Dror G. Feitelson, 2015-03-23 A book for experts and practitioners emphasizing the intuition and reasoning behind definitions and derivations related to evaluating computer systems performance **Computer Security - ESORICS 2024** Joaquin Garcia-Alfaro, Rafał Kozik, Michał Choraś, Sokratis Katsikas, 2024-09-05 This four volume set LNCS 14982 14985 constitutes the refereed proceedings of the 29th European Symposium on Research in Computer Security ESORICS 2024 held in Bydgoszcz Poland during September 16 20 2024 The 86 full papers presented in these proceedings were carefully reviewed and selected from 535 submissions They were organized in topical sections as follows Part I Security and Machine Learning Part II Network Web Hardware and Cloud Privacy and Personal Data Protection Part III Software and Systems Security Applied Cryptography Part IV Attacks and Defenses Miscellaneous [Handbook of Research on Pattern Engineering System Development for Big Data Analytics](#) Tiwari, Vivek, Thakur, Ramjeevan Singh, Tiwari, Basant, Gupta, Shailendra, 2018-04-20 Due to the growing use of web applications and communication devices the use of data has increased throughout various industries It is necessary to develop new techniques for managing data in order to ensure adequate usage The Handbook of Research on Pattern Engineering System Development for Big Data Analytics is a critical scholarly resource that examines the incorporation of pattern management in business technologies as well as decision making and prediction process through the use of data management and analysis Featuring coverage on a broad range of topics such as business intelligence feature extraction and data collection this publication is geared towards professionals academicians practitioners and researchers seeking current research on the development of pattern management systems for business applications **Computer and Information Sciences III** Erol Gelenbe, Ricardo Lent, 2012-10-29 A collection of papers from ISCIS 27th Annual Symposium Based on a rigorous selection of worldwide submissions of advanced research papers this volume

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*Current Awareness Abstracts* ,2001      **Johnson V. Edgar** ,1996      *Web Technologies* Arthur Tatnall,2009-10-31 With the technological advancement of mobile devices social networking and electronic services Web technologies continues to play an ever growing part of the global way of life incorporated into cultural economical and organizational levels Web Technologies Concepts Methodologies Tools and Applications 4 Volume provides a comprehensive depiction of current and future trends in support of the evolution of Web information systems Web applications and the Internet Through coverage of the latest models concepts and architectures this multiple volume reference supplies audiences with an authoritative source of information and direction for the further development of the Internet and Web based phenomena

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