

Google Meets eBay: Answer Ratings,

Cornell University Library

Last revised: May 2003

Question Source: M = Maryland; G = Google Answers; C = Cornell

Number	Source	Difficulty	Question	Rating: Cornell Answer	Average	Time (minutes)	Rating: Google Answers	Average	Cost	Evaluation Comments
1	M	1	What was the population of Afghanistan in 2000 and what is their official language?	3 2	2.5	15	5 4	4.5	\$2.50	(Cornell answer) doesn't give statistics on languages. Population est. was given for 2001; patron asked for 2000. Gave a referral, not an answer. (Google answer): cleaner answers for population and language.
2	M	2	What is the title of the proposed anti-terrorism bill that I believe has something to do with trust funds and where can I find a copy?	3 1	2.0	15	5 5	5.0	\$5.00 (\$4.50)	(The Cornell answer) does not give the answer and leaves the patron with a list of "to dos." Why tell about Lexis Nexis without telling how one becomes a user? It's simply gratuitous information that the patron probably can't do anything with! I get the feeling that the info specialist got the 20 – 50 hits and didn't even bother trying to figure out from there what would be the most likely. "More info about the specific bill...item" is vague. What kind of info – dates? Context? (The Google answer) answers the question and goes above and beyond (since the patron asked only for the title) by providing a link to the full text.
3	M	2	I am writing a term paper on smoking behavior among Latinos in the U.S. My teacher said that there is a good article by Stable in some journal but he wasn't sure if that was the complete last name. Can you help me find this article?	3 4	3.5	15	5 4	4.5	\$5.00 (\$4.50)	(The Google answer) must be a reference librarian, judging from the thoroughness. Both point the patron to "how to do research" instead of just providing the answer. In (the Cornell Answer) I like the fact that the person is identified as a possibility rather than "the" doctor. In (the Google Answer), even though the information is more specific, the patron is not cautioned enough that this is a possibility. In both cases I would have liked to see the patron directed to their public or academic library for verification.

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4	M	2	What is the name of the first planet discovered outside of our solar system?	2 4	3.0	25	4 3	3.5	\$5.00	(The Google answer) provides an exhaustive list of resources for the question. If the information provided is relevant to the patron, it would appear that it is a better result than (the Cornell answer). Besides, an "exhaustive webliography" may provide too much disparate information. (Google answer): almost overkill depending on what the patron wanted. But the answer is there. (Cornell answer): clearer (cleaner?) answer.
5	M	1	What was the September unemployment rate for New York, California, and Texas and the whole nation?	3 4	3.5	15	5 1	3.0	\$2.50 (\$2.00)	(Cornell answer) does not include seasonal adjustments. If the patron is looking for percentages, then (the Cornell answer) is sufficient data. (The Google answer) is not qualified with a description of "seasonal adjustments."
6	M	1	Has Harrison Ford ever given testimony before Congress? What about, and where can I get a copy?	5 5	5.0	15	4 2	3.0	\$2.50 (\$2.00)	I prefer (the Cornell answer) because it includes the search phrasing. (The Google answer) is good in that it gives the patron what he/she needs. I would expect to see instructions on how to find the document and I expect to see a citation. Government information can be difficult to find. I prefer (the Cornell answer) because he/she listed the URL (although I'm not sure if it's authoritative) and the resource that was used (Congressional Universe).
7	M	3	Where and how did Geoffrey Chaucer die?	2 3	2.5	45	4 4	4.0	\$10.00	Too much commentary in (the Google answer), though the links are good. (Cornell answer) is good but I wonder if electronic resources should've been consulted as well.
8	M	2	I would like to get a teaching job in Europe on a U.S. military base. Where can I find the information I need to become a teacher overseas?	3 4	3.5	20	4 3	3.5	\$5.00	(The Cornell answer) answered the question very directly.

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9	M	1	What was the highest percentage of total votes cast in a state for Ross Perot in the 1996 election? And the lowest?	3 2 5	3.33	10	5 4 4	4.33	\$2.50	The problem with (the Cornell answer) is that the user asked for total votes by <u>state</u> . It does not include the S. Carolina info. (The Cornell answer) misquoted 14.19 as 14.9 and didn't give the lowest <u>state</u> . (The Google answer) provides state names, although they weren't asked for. Too much info?
10	M	2	When was smallpox eradicated and why is it being considered a potential threat in current bioterrorism scenarios?	5 3 4	4.0	15	5 4 3	4.0	\$5.00	I like (Google answer's) attempt to give extra info and the FAQs from the WHO page; however, I find the CDC's info to be more succinct and more credible (though WHO and PBS are pretty reliable and credible).
11	M	2	How many people died in automobile accidents each year in the past five years?	5 2	3.5	10	4 5	4.5	\$5.00	I think (the Cornell answer) is better because of its easy navigation and no downloading of Adobe is necessary. (The Google answer): Clear, cited and well annotated. Patron needs to look no further. Perfect. (The Cornell answer): Patron could have stumbled on this on their own. Pages given are not that easy to figure out once you get there. Although it may get them near the answer, just a bit more effort on the part of the person making the referral could have yielded a clear answer as supplied by (Google).
12*	M	2	How many law enforcement officers were killed in 1999 and 2000 and how many were killed accidentally?	2 5	3.5	10	5 4	4.5	\$5.00	(The Cornell answer) is much easier to read and it's from an official, authoritative source. (The Google answer) is more news oriented and it's hard to find the answers to the questions. (The Google answer) also has extra info in it that may not be wanted.

* questions 13-20 were renumbered to keep questions together by source.

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13 (15)	C	3	There is a lost play by Thyestes, written by Quintus Ennius. There is also a 1950s Benedictine Monk named Father Ernetti who developed a chronovisor and claimed to have been able to bring back across time portions of this play in Latin. Where can I find the text of this lost play?	4 5	4.5	20	4 3	3.5	\$10.00	(Google answer) doesn't mention the fact that a person could borrow the book from a library. It gives the person reviews when they didn't ask for them. It recommends commercial sites like half.com and amazon.com. I like (the Cornell answer) better. It's more objective
14 (16)	C	2-3	I'm looking for an article published in the <i>Bulletin de la Societe de Anthropologie</i> 4, 1893. The author's name is Leonce Manouvrier.	3 2	2.5	45	3 4	3.5	\$10.00	I am of the KISS school. Most people would have no idea what the holdings in (the Cornell answer) mean. (The Google answer) gives the titles of possible matches and explains how to get the articles.
15 (17)	C	3	I would like 5 scholarly articles (no older than 2000) on how creative leadership/management affected recent advances in the textile/clothing/fashion industry.	3 (1-2?)	2.25	90-120	3 (1-2?)	2.25	\$10.00 then \$50.00	<p>"Best" article was found by (Cornell). #E. JASTOR doesn't exist, though the error is small (re: Google answer). (Google answer) could have been more creative in its keyword search terms. Did they try subject searches? (Google answer) isn't as broad, not having used key academic databases that would be on target. ACM is and odd choice.</p> <p>I'm not sure how I would use the rating scale. Both answers can be improved <u>a lot</u>. Both require further reference interviews prior to the information search. (Any geographical focus?). (The Cornell answer)'s presentation is poor. I'd put most relevant first and will not include lengthy explanation if we are sending full-text. I'd have different results with ABI & Business Source Premier. (I wouldn't put "marketing management" as sub in ABI for example for this question. (The Google answer) is more organized and the presentation is more logical. However, it doesn't include articles from major business journals (that are indexed in ABI or Business Source), and the result doesn't fully answer to the question.</p>

Number	Source	Difficulty	Question	Rating: Cornell Answer	Average	Time (minutes)	Rating: Google Answers	Average	Cost	Evaluation Comments
16 (18)	C	3	I am looking for exact locations of American-owned "sweatshops" in foreign countries.	5	4.0	150 - 180	3	3.0	\$5.00 then \$100.00	<p>If we're going to be responding online, grammar needs to be accurate and language dear! This may sound picky, but it's a reflection of our work & professionalism. The last part of (the Google answer) is better – but too much. (The Cornell answer) seems right on target to me.</p> <p>(The Cornell answer) lacks follow up with the patron, so I've assumed this was the Cornell response and thus further interactions were not possible. I'd've liked to have seen the sorts of questions that would have been asked. (The Google answer) didn't give more info. About the "academic study" that examined Nike, et al. I would have wanted to see that. (Google) did a better job of narrowing down the question's parameters because of the online ref. Interview. In all of these answers, it's the ref. Interview that is key and always leads to the best response.</p>
17 (19)	C	3	I am looking for historical information on the settlement of Lubavitcher Jews in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, as well as information on how West Indian immigrants are being assimilated (or not) into the neighborhood.	2	2.5	30	3	2.75	\$10.00	<p>(The Google answer) throws a lot of information at the requestor without clear indication of credibility or validity. The (Cornell Answer) is helpful but very brief. Depending on the immediacy of the information need, (the Google answer) may prove to be the more attractive response, whereas (the Cornell answer) is possible more useful in the long term.</p> <p>(Google answer): This answer gives some good basic information, but did tend to get off the mark. Some of the material mentioned seemed to have only a tangential connection to the question, such as the Howie Mandel film and ethnic tour of Brooklyn. While the incident in Crown Heights may figure into an answer, the question clearly asks for historical information. The second question of the West Indian immigrants seemed to have gotten lost in the answer, meriting just a mention in a sort of blanket statement about all groups and assimilation in this situation. I was a bit put off by the opinions that came through, such as "reason and hope will always prevail." Not that I necessarily disagree, but it seems out of place in an answer to a reference question.</p>

Number	Source	Difficulty	Question	Rating: Cornell Answer	Average	Time (minutes)	Rating: Google Answers	Average	Cost	Evaluation Comments
										<p>(Cornell answer): Not a real answer to the question posed, but a strategy. Nice to know there are many books on the topic, but what are they? Why can I only get them at a college library? Are there no articles or web sites that I can look at? Why should I use these subject headings? How should I use these subject headings? What is interlibrary loan? This answer raises more questions than answers. Also, a bit heavy on the library jargon. If I were a betting person, I would say this was a generic answer to an e-mail question from outside Cornell.</p>
18 (20)	C	3	In what ways and why did the federal government promote or regulate the invention of radio, television, and computer industries in the U.S. from 1912 – 1950?	4 3/4 Content/ Style	3.75	30	4 4/3 Content/ Style	3.75	\$10.00	<p>(Cornell Answer): Goes straight to 1934 FCC info, which is what it turns out the patron wants, but could have provided some of the URL's that (Google) recommends. Overall, the patron is told to come to the library for consultation. (Google Answer): Although the person giving the answers comes across as condescending, he or she gets more info out of the patron and the provides many apparently useful URLs – but does no research for established print resources. Too web-based, but provides with immediate content.</p> <p>I'd want to know how much time was spent on (the Google answer) – this “answer” crosses the line into <u>doing</u> the person's (student's?) research for them. I like the second part of the answer, with substantive sources listed, but the opening greeting is totally inappropriate. (The Cornell answer): a little wordy, but appropriate response to get the patron (student?) to focus the question and also to clarify the level of service provided. I rated them the same because I like parts of each.</p>

Number	Source	Difficulty	Question	Rating: Cornell Answer	Average	Time (minutes)	Rating: Google Answers	Average	Cost	Evaluation Comments
19 (13)	G	3	What exactly was the FEME Organisation that operated in Germany in 1922-1926. Are the letters an acronym? And was it connected with the Black Reichswehr?	5 5	5.0	90-120	3 1	2.0	\$2.00	(The Cornell answer) answers the question cleanly and clearly. (The Google answer) doesn't answer what the Feme Organization is, nor if it's an acronym. Because it doesn't answer the [main] question, it can't answer the last question specifically.
20 (14)	G	2	I am trying to find out information about the old Knickerbocker theater that once stood at 18th and Columbia Road N.W. Washington DC. I would like to learn more about the theater even though I know that it was quite new at the time when it was destroyed in the knickerbocker snowstorm of 1922. I would like to know where I can get my hands on some articles or pictures of the old theater. Anything you might like to share with me would be most appreciated.	3 5	4.0	60-90	4 2	3.0	\$5.00	I think the average person wouldn't go to the lengths indicated in (the Cornell answer), especially using the local library.
21	G	3	I would like to be advised about religious statistics such as global numbers of Christianity in comparison to other religions and how the bible sells in competition with the Koran?	3 4	3.5	20	4 4.5	4.25	\$2.00	(The Cornell answer) provides a comprehensive response and provides the requestor with good sources in order to follow up. Both responses address the issues of ?? in publication/sales statistics. (The Google answer) provides a more immediate response and perhaps a more direct answer. (Cornell answer): While this answer did not provide numbers, it did give a few ways to find those numbers, including a web site. The second part of the question was answered with all the necessary caveats, which are good to be aware of. It was brief and to the point. (Google answer): I liked this answer from a patron point of view. It gave me numbers and sources. It also contained the caveats of comparing apples to oranges, in this case Bible to Korans.

Number	Source	Difficulty	Question	Rating: Cornell Answer	Average	Time (minutes)	Rating: Google Answers	Average	Cost	Evaluation Comments
22	G	4	What is the protocol for the synthesis of Fosmidomycin, the herbicide antibiotic being studied for use in treating Malaria? I believe there is a protocol by Hashimoto, but I cannot locate it. Is Fosmidomycin available commercially to botanists as a pure compound from vendors, not in a product such as Roundup?	3 1 4	2.66	35	4 3 2	3	\$10.00	<p>Both answers directly and satisfactorily answer one part of the question perfectly, but miss answering the other [part]. (The Google answer) missed the fact that the protocol was a patent. (The Cornell answer) failed to find commercial supplies. I liked the directness and focus of (the Cornell answer), but admire the thoroughness of (the Google answer). It's very likely that the patron will be led to the protocol from one of the sources given, but (the Cornell answer) offers no real leads to answering the question about commercial supplies.</p> <p>(The Google answer) offers way too much information; it's too easy to get lost with all those links. On the other hand, (the Cornell answer) is poor b/c it doesn't give enough information, most notably the fact that fosmidomycin can be purchased. Also, I'm not too fond of the personalized response in (the Google answer); however, the fact that the librarian offered to continue looking is excellent.</p> <p>(The Google answer): it's nice that there's a list of URLs for the patron, but it's obvious that there are scholarly articles that address the topic. More reliable information is given in (the Cornell answer).</p>

Number	Source	Difficulty	Question	Rating: Cornell Answer	Average	Time (minutes)	Rating: Google Answers	Average	Cost	Evaluation Comments
23	G	1	looking for the most comprehensive portal in new zealand for new zealand topics, with the most active links to the most topics	3 4	3.5	15-20	3 2	2.5	\$2.00	<p>Both give a good start but both answer only the first part of the question. (The Google Answer) is more specific than (the Cornell Answer) but it is ignoring the fact that there is a “most active links to most topics” part of the question. However, it includes the search statement at the end, which is helpful.</p> <p>(The Google answer) hands the information over to the patron but does not teach them anything. Search terms were included which are always nice to have! (The Cornell answer): Instead of figuring out what would be the most comprehensive portals, you provide a link to the answer from what is probably a good source on information (SE Colossus). This shows the patron how to find information.</p>
24	G	3-4	I am looking for a useful Latin motto to use for a creative endeavor. "We think, therefore we can" is what we prefer, but it does not translate well. this is because the Latin word "possumus" (for 'we can') does not have a positive association in many people's minds. Are there alternative Latin words and phrases we might consider for the 'we can' part of the motto? Something expressing the idea of capability, or being able to accomplish a difficult task or creative challenge, is what we are looking for.	4 4	3.6	35	3 4	3.33	\$10.00	<p>Although (the Google answer) bombards the user with URLs, I don't think it's as helpful as (the Cornell answer), which evinces some personal expertise with the language and familiarity with the problem. (Google) gives the user some avenues to pursue – an important facet of any answer – but if I were the user I'd have more confidence in (the Cornell answer).</p> <p>I like (the Cornell answer) for all the suggestions; however, I question whether or not the librarian should be providing actual alternatives rather than providing the patron with the resources to find his/her own answers, like (Google). OK, after re-reading the question, I see that the patron wants alternatives. I like (the Google answer) better because it does less of a job of answering/interpreting the question, as I don't think the librarian should be interpreting answers. I like that (Google) gives some alternatives, but also recommends that the patron use the suggested resources to find the information him/herself.</p>

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				3			3			<p>This was a hard one! I think both answers are equally good. They both provide viable alternatives for the patron. (Google) actually provides URLs for the patron to check out, while (Cornell) provides print. However, sometimes leaving the decision up to the patron as to what web sites are reliable and what sites are junk can be a problem. If they are university-related links as in (the Google answer), there isn't much of a problem. For a question like this, though (simple conjugation), I think web resources are ok. Both answers would help the patron equally.</p>