

# **Google the Omnipotent**

**By**

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I was racking my brain one day, trying to come up with a clever phrase for a particular column. As I'm sure you're aware, I never did. But that's because I got off track when I started to wonder if, instead of "racking" my brain, I might actually be "wracking" my brain. Either way, it was painful.

There was a day I would have consulted my trusty dictionary to answer such a question. But dictionaries are for people who either don't need reading glasses or need them and can find them. The rest of us now have the option of going to the Internet and consulting Google or another search engine. The print is larger and, for me, it's faster than finding my glasses.

After a quick Google search, I learned that I was most likely racking (stretching out, as with the ancient torture device) rather than wracking (ruining or destroying) my brain, which is lucky because I still need it.

Let me explain for you Internet avoiders: Google is the Great Reference Librarian in the sky. Google knows ALL! I love Google. I fear Google. I wonder what I did before Google. I suppose, back then, if I needed to know how crickets sing or the difference between a yam and a sweet potato, I checked the encyclopedia--or I just made it up. Now I go online where, for all I know, someone else made it up.

I've been able Google answers for many of my most pressing questions, and some of them may even be right. For example, I found the cost of all the gifts listed in the "12 days of Christmas," though not why anyone would want ten lords a leaping. And I

learned what's "corned" about "corned beef." In case you're wondering, the meat is cured by covering it with large kernels of salt that, for some reason, are called "corns of salt." Maybe "corned beef" sounds better than "kerneled beef."

When I was writing a recent column about recycling, I wanted to know what the majority of consumers call that bubbly beverage that comes in aluminum cans. And no, I don't mean champagne. As far as I know, champagne doesn't come in aluminum cans, but you could Google it to be sure.

I typed the phrase "soda or pop" into Google and voila! Someone--maybe a graduate student in need of a research project--has created a map showing which name is most popular in each state; "pop," "soda," or "other," which seems like an odd name to me.

When I was writing about the fashion trends of 2010, naturally I went to Google. That's how I discovered that bunny ears are in style this year. I'm still waiting to buy mine in the hopes that they go out of style by 2011.

I was once tempted to use a cliché I'd heard about lemmings following each other off a cliff to their death. But I know nothing about lemmings and was therefore not sure if they actually do follow each other off cliffs. Maybe I'd misunderstood; maybe it was not "lemmings," but "lemons" that follow each other over the cliff.

I turned to Google the All Knowing and learned that the Norwegian lemming population level regularly rises to unsustainable levels, which causes it to crash. This abrupt drop has given rise to the myth of lemming mass suicide. I found no such information about lemons.

When I wrote my rant about cowbells at hockey games, Google the Omnipotent reassured me that I'm not the only one who despises them. In fact, only hockey fans who have already sustained severe hearing loss approve of cowbells. Okay; I made that part up, but only to illustrate an important point. You can't believe everything you read, even if you Googled it--or read it in this column.

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