**Speck, H., Thiele, F. P., & Wagenhöfer, S. (2004). A big leap forward – the next step of educational information retrieval. Paper presented at the *World Conference on***

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With the creation of the World Wide Web based on the concepts of Bush Vannemar, ARPANET, and Tim Berners-Lee an information explosion took place. The release of Mosaic, the first browser, by Marc Andreesen, made this vast amount of knowledge accessible to the average citizen. No method of searching and retrieving this information, however, existed until the development of the first search engine- Lycos. Infoseek, Altavista, HotBot, and Excite soon followed. Yahoo then burst onto the scene moreover, grabbed a fifty percent market share with its well-indexed web catalogue. Microsoft MSN was soon to follow, until Google came onto the scene.

Today’s students turn straight to the Internet when researching assignments. They no longer read newspapers, encyclopedias, books and the like. The proliferation of e-learning opportunities has increased this trend by using the web as the contact point between students and teachers. Search engines have become a crucial part of education, knowledge and research. The algorithm used by a particular search engine will define how it retrieves the information we seek and allows us to access it. Algorithms based on popularity may fail to find new material since that material is not yet popular. Search engines, therefore, tend to focus on known material and the innovative knowledge is often not retrieved. Popularity based retrieval systems are not ideal for research purposes.

Speck and Wagenhofer (2004) propose the use of a decentralized, open source engine to be used in educational information retrieval. The algorithm is publicly known and can be customized by each academic institution. In fact, each institution could build their own repository of knowledge based on its unique needs.