

# Google Hacks by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest

## Reviewed by Mike Ehling

Search-engine guru Tara Calishain's been in the business since 1996, when she published her first book, **Official Guide to Internet Research** (Ventana), and her site [ResearchBuzz](#) (which has a subscription-based "extras" edition available on a paid basis) is devoted to internet research.

I first ran across Calishain a couple of years ago through references on law librarian Genie Tyburski's site "The Virtual Chase," so my initial thought on seeing **Google Hacks** (O'Reilly 2003) was that it would be a researcher's guide to Google. While to a large extent this is true, it's really got something for everyone.

The first two chapters cover Google basics. For example, did you know that Google has a hard-and-fast limit of ten words to a search, ignoring anything more? But there are some ways to minimize the effects of this on your search (Hack #5). Mozilla users might still get something out of Hack #25 (The Mozilla Google Toolbar) although it's outdated, as can only be expected from a book published a year before this review date. But most of Calishain's content is still applicable and relevant.

Later chapters, addressing the Google API, will require programming knowledge, but Calishain is joined by Perl guru Rael Dornfest, so the programming language primarily used is a fairly popular and accessible one.

My own particular interest was in the last thirty-odd pages, Chapter 8, "The Webmaster Side of Google, Hacks #93-100." Actually, these aren't "hacks" in the conventional style of a short and very specific work-around like most of the previous chapters of this book. Chapter 8's "hacks" are more extended discussions of how a designer can optimize her website for Google ranking while avoiding the no-nos such as search-engine spamming that can lead to being banned from Google. All in all quite a good intro for web designers, whose knowledge of internet research techniques and the Google search algorithm may not be quite equal to their

graphic skills. (My one wish is that Calishain have included a hack for Flash developers to make sites with embedded .swf files more search-engine friendly, but this may be expecting too much of a book that's devoted to Google, not Flash.)

Definitely not a book that you'll want to read cover-to-cover, **Google Hacks** by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest is one of those that you'll skim for the content that interests you while keeping handy for repeated reference.

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***Google Hacks: 100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tricks***  
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