First, the name itself A9.com is too cool. I will bet it cost Amazon.com a pretty penny to buy that domain name. Second, what makes A9.com different than Google or Yahoo!?

There are several answers to that; however, the most significant is called Search Inside the Book and it allows you to search book contents also.

When I searched the term "reliability centered maintenance," the standard Google results show up (yes, A9.com uses Google search results). The difference is that I have an option to click on Book Results and the search engine displays a new set of results from books that have a reference to reliability centered maintenance, including the page number, a brief excerpt, and a link directly to the full page from that book. With Amazon's new software, you can actually read full page excerpts for the books listed.

This is important because research indicates that 90 percent of people log onto the Internet in search of information. Books are full of information and none of it is sales oriented.

Standard search engines now allow commercial companies to pay to be listed for certain search terms. Searching for reliability centered maintenance at Google or Yahoo! results in the top listings linked to companies that will sell you reliability centered maintenance training, software, or services.

That is fine if you happen to be searching for a vendor, but I did not enter "reliability centered maintenance vendor" as my search term. I was simply searching for information, not a vendor directory.

Search engines must make money; however, serving vendors first is not a very "web centric" strategy. Long-term winners on the Internet serve visitors first. It is still the people's Internet (for now).

If you are registered with Amazon.com you also can open a tab that includes your search

history, a convenient feature if you conduct repetitive searches on a regular basis or if you cannot remember where that cool page you found during your last search is located. If you are not already registered at Amazon.com, do so now and buy a maintenance book.

Reading is good for your brain and Amazon.com is the most efficient e-commerce site on the Internet. Try the Amazon.com One-Click service if you dare; all that stands between you and a new credit card charge is one simple mouse click.

Searchers at A9.com also get a click history to show how many times they have visited that page. This can save time if you are searching only for new information or new Web sites.

The search results include a Site Info button that provides you with the ranking, popularity, and even traffic statistics of that site. This information is provided by Alexa (another Amazon.com division) and we are not confident in the accuracy of the information provided. It is still interesting even if off a bit, and can let you know if you hit an information goldmine or if you landed in the hinterland of old and outdated information.

Of course, there is also the requisite A9.com toolbar available for download so you can add all these cool features to your Internet browser toolbar.

I really like the new service because I can focus my Internet searches on pure noncommercial information by using the Search Inside the Book feature. I still have access to traditional (and more commercial) searches so nothing is really lost. **MT**