

Origin of the name "Google"

From time to time I read or hear stories of the origin of the search engine and company name "Google" that are incorrect, which prompts me to write this brief account, based on my understanding of the genesis of the name. The source of my information is my friends and colleagues from Wing 3B of the Gates Computer Science Building at Stanford University, where Google was born.

In 1996, Larry Page and Sergey Brin called their initial search engine "BackRub," named for its analysis of the web's "back links." Larry's office was in room 360 of the Gates CS Building, which he shared with several other graduate students, including Sean Anderson, Tamara Munzner, and Lucas Pereira. In 1997, Larry and his officemates discussed a number of possible new names for the rapidly improving search technology. Sean recalls the final brainstorming session as occurring one day during September of that year.

Sean and Larry were in their office, using the whiteboard, trying to think up a good name - something that related to the indexing of an immense amount of data. Sean verbally suggested the word "googolplex," and Larry responded verbally with the shortened form, "googol" (both words refer to specific large numbers). Sean was seated at his computer terminal, so he executed a search of the Internet domain name registry database to see if the newly suggested name was still available for registration and use. Sean is not an infallible speller, and he made the mistake of searching for the name spelled as "google.com," which he found to be available. Larry liked the name, and within hours he took the step of registering the name "google.com" for himself and Sergey (the domain name registration record dates from September 15, 1997).

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