It's not surprising at all that people search for Yahoo

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Earlier this year, one columnist was baffled as to why "Yahoo" was the most searched-for term on Google. I wasn't baffled at all. Back in 2001, Alexa published the top ten most searched-for terms on their service, and four of the top ten were URLs: yahoo.com, hotmail.com, aol.com, and ebay.com. A lot of people simply don't care to learn the difference between the search box and the address bar. "If I type what I want into this box here, I sometimes get a strange error message. But if I type it into that box there, then I get what I want. Therefore, I'll use that box there for everything." And you know what? It doesn't bother me that they don't care. In fact, I think it's good that they don't care. Computers should adapt to people, not the other way around. You can try to explain to these people, "You see, this is a URL, so you type it into the address box. But that is a search phrase, so you type it into the search box." "You-are-what? Look, I don't care about your fancy propeller-beanie acronyms. You computer types are always talking about how computers are so easy to use, and then you make up these arbitrary rules about where I'm supposed to type things. If I want something, I type into this box and click 'Search'. And it finds it. Watch. I want Yahoo, so I type 'yahoo' into the box, and boom, there it is. I have a system that works. Why are you trying to make my life more confusing?" I remember attending a presentation by the MSN Explorer team on what they learned about how people use a web browser. They found many situations where people failed to accomplish their desired task because they typed the right thing into the wrong box. But instead of trying to teach people which box to type it in, they just *expanded the definition of "right"*. You typed your query into the wrong box? No problem, we'll just pretend you typed it into the correct box. In fact, let's just get rid of all these special-purposes boxes. Whatever you want, just type it into this box, and we'll get it for you. I wish the phone company would learn this. Sometimes I'll dial a telephone number and I'll get an automated recording that says, "I'm sorry. You must dial a '1' before the number. Please hang up and try again." Or "I'm sorry. You must not dial a '1' before the number. Please hang up and try again." That's because in the state of Washington, there are complicated rules about when you have to dial a "1" in front of the number and when you don't. (Fortunately, the rule on when you have to dial the area code is easier to remember: If the area code you are calling is the same as the area code you are dialing from, then you can omit the area code.) For example, suppose your home number is 425-882-xxxx. Here's how you have to dial the following numbers:

To call this number	you dial		
425-202-xxxx			202-xxxx
425-203-xxxx	1-		203-xxxx
206-346-xxxx		206-	346-xxxx
206-347-xxxx	1-	206-	347-xxxx

If you get it wrong, the voice comes on the line to tell you. Hey, since you know what I did wrong and you know what I meant to do, *why not just fix it*? If I dial a number and forget the "1", just insert the 1 and connect the call. If I dial a number and include the "1" when I didn't need to, just delete the 1 and connect the call. Don't make me have to look up in the book whether I need a 1 or not. (In the front of the phone book are tables showing which numbers need a "1" and which don't. I hate those tables.)

(Yes, I know there are weird technical/legal reasons for why I have to dial the phone in four different ways depending on whom I want to call. But it's still wrong that these technical/legal reasons mean that the rules for dialing a telephone are impossibly complicated.)

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