Search Off the Record - 37th episode

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[00:00:10] **John Mueller:** [00:00:10] Hello and welcome to another episode of Search Off the Record, a podcast coming to you from the Google Search Team, discussing all things search and having some fun along the way.

[00:00:22] My name is John, and I'm joined today by Lizzi and Gary from the Search Relations team, of which I'm also part of. which I'm also a party. Say hi, Lizzie.

[00:00:31] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:31] Hi, Lizzi.

[00:00:32] **John Mueller:** [00:00:32] Say hi, Gary.

[00:00:34] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:34] Nah. I don't want to.

[00:00:35] **John Mueller:** [00:00:35] No? Anyway, Gary, it's great to be back here. But why am I here?

[00:00:42] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:42] Well, we were told that you don't like this anymore, and I kind of wanted to twist your arm into coming back and show your face, voice.

[00:00:50] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:50] Wait, that's the wrong format.

[00:00:52] **Gary Illyes:** [00:00:52] I was thinking that I don't even know when maybe half a year ago or so, we had an episode about robots.txt and it was a fun episode.

[00:01:03] And then I was thinking about what else is similar to robots.txt and we ended up with sitemaps and I happened to know that you were involved in sitemaps in some ways back in the days, like 1902 AD.

[00:01:21] And maybe you could talk about your experience with sitemaps, and then we probably just deep dive into certain parts of sitemaps.

[00:01:29] **John Mueller:** [00:01:29] Cool, okay. So I guess you could say the sitemaps is how I snucked into Google, which may be a good thing, who knows. We'll see what happens.

[00:01:41] I don't really know much about the story internally with regards to sitemaps way in the beginning, but I kind of saw that externally.

[00:01:49] So, I was active at my own software company and kind of interested in the web and then somehow got interested into SEO. And then, as it happens, Google happened to launch sitemaps right around that time.

[00:02:04] And I thought, well, this is a cool way to sneak into Google. So, I started trying to look into that a little bit, and I noticed that there were no sitemaps generators in the early days, or no kind of easily usable site, so, I made one of the first sitemap generators for Windows at the time.

[00:02:27] **Gary Illyes:** [00:02:27] I think sitemaps was launched in 2005, maybe like in the very, very beginning. It was a Google initiative. And then later, it became supported by other search engines as well.

[00:02:39] Right around that time, Google also published script to create sitemaps, how your generator was different from that script?

[00:02:48] **John Mueller:** [00:02:48] I made a generator for Windows. So, instead of having to run some obscure script in this weird programming language that nobody knew about it the time called Python, I made something that was more usable by average site owners, or at least I thought it would be.

[00:03:09] So basically you enter your website and then it goes off and crawls your website based on some settings that you provide. And then in the end, when it knows about everything, it generates the sitemap file for you. I thought that was pretty neat at the time.

[00:03:24] And the sitemaps project was, I think, launched between different teams in Mountain View, in Kirkland, and in Zurich.

[00:03:34] So, there was definitely a big team in Zurich at the time, which I didn't really realize, I was like, I don't know, as someone externally from Google, you just "Oh, Google and you have no idea what is actually behind it.

[00:03:47] But it was interesting because at some point I got invited to chat with the team in Zurich. It was interesting to meet some of the people that were active there.

[00:03:55] And I think one of the people that I met there still works in Zurich, so that was pretty cool.

[00:04:01] I think the initial initiative from the sitemaps side or from Google was really about kind of understanding the web a little bit better, making it easier to crawl and find all of the content on the way.

[00:04:14] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:14] Did you feel like that helped at the time when you started using a sitemap? Did that help with your early SEO experiences trying to get your software company sites found?

[00:04:27] **John Mueller:** [00:04:27] To some extent, I thought, especially the process leading up to that, was really helpful.

[00:04:34] I don't know, SEO did it at the time, but it's kind of that process of crawling your website, was really eye-opening, because in the early days, you're like, Google is this big magic black box and nobody really knows what it's actually doing.

[00:04:49] And then when you crawl your website yourself, you realize there're actually a lot of technical details that are involved with crawling. And there's a lot of things that you can do right or that you could do wrong on your website, and that I thought was really interesting.

[00:05:04] So it's kind of like regardless of whether or not sitemap files actually helped with the visibility of your website, that step of creating a sitemap file force you to look at your website and think about, "Well, what are all of the URLs that Google could find? And why is it not finding this part? And what's up with all of these parameters and upper and lower case?" And all of these things were--when you crawl your website-- It's like suddenly this infinite mess.

[00:05:30] And when you see that for the first time, you realize "Well, actually, this is something that I can control and this is something that a site owner can kind of work on to make it easier for engines to crawl.

[00:05:42] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:05:42] Then did you make some changes on your website based off of the learning exercises? And if so, what kind of changes did you do?

[00:05:50] **John Mueller:** [00:05:50] I don't know the details of what I changed of our website, but things like URL parameters were super common.

[00:05:58] And I kind of understanding that using random URL parameters like session IDs and URL parameters at the time--It was super common to have.

[00:06:10] You just have this really long number as a parameter attached, and every user gets a different number.

[00:06:17] And that's something that--In the early days, you would look at a website and say, "Well, it is how it is, I'm not supposed to understand all of these things." But when you crawl that, you realize what actually makes it pretty much impossible to crawl the website properly, unless a search engine can figure them out. And if you can figure it out for the search engine, it makes it a little bit easier.

[00:06:38] I noticed this on our website, but also when I made the generator, other people were using it, and they would contact me say, "Well I ran your tool on my website and it's not stopping."

[00:06:50] And then you kind of are forced to look at other people's websites and try them out as well. And then you notice that these kinds of crawling issues, they're just everywhere.

[00:07:00] I think a lot of that has gotten significantly better because people use more common CMS systems and they don't generate this kind of messy website anymore. But at least just back in the early days, it's super common to have a website that is pretty much impossible to crawl.

[00:07:17] **Gary Illyes:** [00:07:17] I think the session ID was one of those things that was pretty much transparent to a human eye. Basically, it was so prevalent on the Internet that you didn't even notice as a human in the URL. And you are just assuming that it's not there, but for a search engine or for any crawler, basically, that meant that there's an infinite number of URLs, will to do an infinite number of URLs on the site.

[00:07:42] And as with any crawler, crawlers are happy to crawl that URL, and sitemaps probably were a very eye-opening thing for webmasters and site owners and developers in general.

[00:07:55] **John Mueller:** [00:07:55] Yeah.

[00:07:56] **Gary Illyes:** [00:07:56] What about different tags that can show up in a sitemap? Because I'm very certain that most people who dealt with sitemap know that you have the <i>LOC LogTag</i>, where you put the URL and then you have a bunch of <i>Butter Tags</i> like priority and chain frequency that are basically covered in meth.

[00:08:14] And some people think that search engines use them; some other people think that search engines don't use them. How are those with your generator?

[00:08:23] **John Mueller:** [00:08:23] Taking a step back, these sitemap files themselves are basically text files, and you can look at them in a text editor, which at the time was kind of interesting for me to see.

[00:08:33] I expected to see some machine language file, but XML is essentially like HTML pages, you have different tags and different content in there. And the main tags there for the sitemap files are really like the URL. You specify the URL.

[00:08:48] I don't even know what they're all called nowadays or what they're still called, but they're also extra fields that you can add, which I think are optional, like the last modification date, the change frequency and the priority. And I'm sure I'm forgetting something, but it's something along those lines.

[00:09:07] And the interesting thing--I think is the assumption I have from this sitemap side--is that Google wanted to understand a little better which pages are changing, how frequently, and which pages you think are important. And that's kind of with the change frequency and the priority data in the sitemap file.

[00:09:25] But it feels like that was something that was more like wishful thinking. Maybe we can learn more about the web like this, because in practice, of course, if you give people a field that says priority, they're going to say my website is the most important.

[00:09:39] And all of my pages are the most important and using that as a way to
 understand more about the website isn't really hard because people are just biased. They think their stuff is the most important.

[00:09:50] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:50] Well, what is the priority supposed to be on the web or within the context of your own site? Because I guess that would be a good exercise to prioritize within your own site, which are the things that change more often. So why wouldn't you actually go through that exercise?

[00:10:07] Unless you're thinking like, "Oh, this is like, my website compared to John Mueller's website," I think mine is priority number one.

[00:10:14] **Gary Illyes:** [00:10:14] I think you're being way too rational.

[00:10:17] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:17] Oh, okay. [laughing] I'm not accounting for other things on the Internet.

[00:10:22] **Gary Illyes:** [00:10:22] I mean, the Internet itself is not the rational. If you are a small business owner, for example, then why would you want to do that exercise? Basically, you just want to say that, "Well, I publish these pages and all these pages are important to me." So, here.

[00:10:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:38] I guess it's a "Is crawl budget a thing here?"

[00:10:41] **Gary Illyes:** [00:10:41] Most people don't even know about crawl budget. There's a few bigger entities on the Internet who made crawl budget of thing, but before--I don't want to say a stupid day, but I would say 2013, I rarely ever heard of crawl budget. And then suddenly, it came to being, and then we started talking about it because, reasons.

[00:11:01] **John Mueller:** [00:11:01] I think the idea behind priority is kind of understandable. But at the same time, if you're making these files for any larger website, you have to automatically fill out these values. And you don't necessarily know what is the relative priority of this random blog post that I have.

[00:11:20] And at some point you just say, "Well, everything is important." Or you create this kind of artificial structure of priority for your website, but you can't really determine it yourself.

[00:11:34] And at that point, the data is not really that useful. And I think even in our documentation, we now say we don't use priority from a sitemap file.

[00:11:44] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:44] This is true.

[00:11:45] **Gary Illyes:** [00:11:45] Well, it was for change frequency, I think, where you can actually expect to know when your page will actually change. Like, how often should it change?

[00:11:54] Because if you have the terms of service, for example, or if we go to our documentation to developers.google.com/search, there are pages that we haven't touched for two years now, because we just had no reason to touch them.

[00:12:08] But when we publish those pages, we wouldn't have known that we are not going to touch them for two years.

[00:12:14] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:12:14] Okay, so there's the change frequency thing and there's also the last mod thing.

[00:12:19] **John Mueller:** [00:12:19] I mean the last modification date is something that I would say there is an absolute value that you can supply there. And that's something that the script can look at.

[00:12:28] And if it looks at your pages and says, "Well, I updated this page one year ago or last week," it's a real date that you can supply, whereas with the change frequency, you don't really know in advance how often it will change and it's more that search engines could, over time, track kind of how often this page changes on average, and they could use that to determine how often to recall it. So at that point, why would a site owner specify that directly? Because it's much more tempting to say, "Well, this page could change every day, even if it doesn't."

[00:13:01] **Gary Illyes:** [00:13:01] But also, we lost mod. I think we are not doing a great job explaining when you should update that tag, because it should be something like last significant update, like when you are updating the content itself, not some heads tag or element, like in the HTML.

[00:13:18] **John Mueller:** [00:13:18] I disagree.

[00:13:19] **Gary Illyes:** [00:13:19] Okay. I know that some search engines use it, for example, I know that Bing is using it and Google doesn't use it because, reasons.

[00:13:31] And one of the reasons is that it's highly unreliable because people want search engines to believe that their page changed, so that it should be crawled, but in reality, the page didn't even change, for example, or it changed just a little.

[00:13:48] **John Mueller:** [00:13:48] I think it's trickier in that regard, yeah.

[00:13:52] I mean, it's still like you can pull out the primary content and say this content changed, but at the same time, you could change something-- your heading or something in your footer or in the sidebar that has links to other pieces of content.

[00:14:04] And technically, that's a change on your page. And technically, that's something that search engines could find value in. So maybe the issue is more that there's difference of opinion on what the date should be.

[00:14:18] And then at that point, it's like that people mean different things with the same value. Like what can search engines do with it.

[00:14:26] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:14:26] Well, you bring up a good point, like significant changes to search engines or to users. Because it may be, "Is that different? What would be considered significant?" Or like an

interesting change like just changing a link, or we added this reference or something. It could be a new page for search engine to identify, but for a user, it was just like, "Well, that's another link. Okay."

[00:14:46] **John Mueller:** [00:14:46] I mean, it could be something like adding structured data where the user doesn't see any change at all, but for the site owner, it's really important because suddenly you're providing information for search engines that they could show in different a snippet, for example.

[00:15:01] **Gary Illyes:** [00:15:01] Fair point. I'll buy in.

[00:15:03] **John Mueller:** [00:15:03] But, I mean, kind of this discussion of what is actually a change that should be flagged as a date? Doing that in an automated way across a larger website, I imagine that's pretty tricky.

[00:15:16] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:15:16] Well, the chain frequency or the last one? Because the last one seems like that could be okay, because it's like in the past.

[00:15:22] **John Mueller:** [00:15:22] I think the chain frequently like you can't really know ahead of time, but last modification, I've even feels like something where people might say, "Oh, well, the last time I edited this article or the last time the HTML change."

[00:15:34] **Gary Illyes:** [00:15:34] Right, now you mention that you are updating something in the head for the whole site, like you are injecting a verification tag, for example,

[00:15:42] And then, it propagates across all your pages and you have two million pages. And suddenly, all the last mod
tags are updated to, basically, now. Is that useful? I doubt it.

[00:15:54] **John Mueller:** [00:15:54] I don't know. Or you change your copyright date, like at the end of the year, like copyright 2022.

[00:16:00] **Gary Illyes:** [00:16:00] We've actually seen that. I remember someone from the sitemap team back in the days was complaining. That was a real issue that when New Year's hit the large portion of the change frequencies updated to January 1st.

[00:15:54] **John Mueller:** [00:15:54] So if it was an issue, that means it was used.

[00:16:17] **Gary Illyes:** [00:16:17] I can't confirm or deny anything without the explicit approval of the secretary.

[00:16:22] **John Mueller:** [00:16:22] Another thing that kind of came out with sitemaps. So, I thought to kind of semi-related things were pretty cool at the time.

[00:16:31] So, the standard was kind of announced or they debated it, I don't know how they framed it in the early days. But they also created this kind of console thing, where site owners could go and verify their sites and add sitemap files.

[00:16:46] **Gary Illyes:** [00:16:46] Webmaster tools.

[00:16:47] **John Mueller:** [00:16:47] Webmaster tools, Yeah. The early webmaster tools,

[00:16:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:16:51] Sitemaps, Google Sitemaps tool. Does it have the word tool or console?

[00:16:56] **John Mueller:** [00:16:56] I think it was called Google Sitemaps.

[00:16:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:16:58] And people just knew that this was like a thing that you could use? You didn't need the word tool in the name?

[00:17:04] **Gary Illyes:** [00:17:04] You know how we are really good at picking terms that are ambiguous?

[00:17:09] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:17:09] Oh, yeah.

[00:17:09] **Gary Illyes:** [00:17:09] Okay, so Google Sitemaps.

[00:17:12] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:17:12] Excellent, excellent name for many things. The tool probably, also the Docks and the Help group.

[00:17:19] **John Mueller:** [00:17:19] Yeah, the Help group was the other thing that came out at the time, because it was positioned kind of as better for site owners, and they wanted to get their feedback, I guess,so they created a help group for site owners, specifically, around sitemaps and I got involved in that at the time as well, kind of helping people with their...

[00:17:41] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:17:41] Pre-Google?

[00:17:43] **John Mueller:** [00:17:43] Yeah, pre-Google, helping people to figure things out.

[00:17:46] **Gary Illyes:** [00:17:46] Oh, you were a bionic poster, right?

[00:17:48] **John Mueller:** [00:17:48] That was, I think, before that. At some point, it migrated from being a group about sitemaps to being the webmaster help group or something like that.

[00:17:58] That that was pretty fun. And I guess in the early days, like there wasn't a ton of documentation from Google site about how to make websites, so there's lots of guessing and people trying to make tests. It was interesting.

[00:18:11] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:18:11] Did it just start out with how to use sitemaps and
 then kind of grow from there?

[00:18:15] **John Mueller:** [00:18:15] So I think the main problem there was because there was no other Google official discussion forum for these kind of SEO topics, everyone went to the sitemaps group and it's like "Why is my website not being indexed?" And luckily, we solved that problem. Right, Gary?

[00:18:34] **Gary Illyes:** [00:18:34] I don't want to talk about it. It's still a trauma for me. I still have PTSD. I mean other parts of Google or other search engines of Google, like Google news. They had similar problems. They didn't have documentation or the documentation was not great. And that's how I got involved in new sitemaps as well. Because I don't know if you know, but sitemaps can have extensions, because it's an XML file, and it's extensible.

[00:19:07] **John Mueller:** [00:19:07] Oh wait, so new sitemap is different from a normal sitemap? I thought it was just smaller.

[00:19:13] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:13] What?

[00:19:13] **John Mueller:** [00:19:13] No?

[00:19:14] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:14] What?

[00:19:15] **John Mueller:** [00:19:15] I thought that was just a limit of like the number of pages that you could include.

[00:19:19] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:19:19] Wait, you know the answer to this. We've been trying to track down why there's a discrepancy. We thought maybe there's a discrepancy.

[00:19:25] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:25] There is a discrepancy or not?

[00:19:27] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:19:27] We don't know. Now, we're trying to find out.

[00:19:29] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:29] No, I'm asking John.

[00:19:30] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:19:30] John?

[00:19:31] **John Mueller:** [00:19:31] I was never involved with the new side of things.

[00:19:35] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:35] You would know.

[00:19:36] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:19:36] Well, you seem to know something.

[00:19:38] **John Mueller:** [00:19:38] Yeah, I just know it's like a smaller file. Maybe, I knew more about this in the past. And you're kind of making me worry that I'm forgetting things, but I don't really know the details of what otherwise is kind of special around news sitemaps?

[00:19:54] **Gary Illyes:** [00:19:54] So, let's go back to that, to sitemap extensions, because those are one of the exciting things that you can do with sitemaps. Basically, you have the base sitemap and then you can extend it with a new namespace like XML namespace. And then, it becomes an image sitemap or a video sitemap or new sitemap, and I'm very certain that there are bunch more different segments as well that we didn't talk about, but those seem to have been very popular also in the earlier days of sitemaps.

[00:20:24] I think video sitemaps, for example, came to be around like 2008-2009 when universal search was launched. And then video became more prominent on search result pages.

[00:20:36] And then we started adding because that was a Google thing, like it was a Google sitemap extension. We could just add tags to it, whenever we wanted, which I can decide if it was a good thing or a bad thing.

[00:20:49] **John Mueller:** [00:20:49] Definitely good!

[00:20:50] **Gary Illyes:** [00:20:50] Okay. It was a good thing, now it's a bad thing.

[00:20:53] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:20:53] Why is it a bad thing?

[00:20:55] **Gary Illyes:** [00:20:55] Well, you would know, because you maintain our documentation and some of these extensions have these kilometer-long--No, I'm sorry--half-mile-long tables with tags and attributes.

[00:21:09] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:21:09] Yes, I do know about that. Do you think that they need to be that long?

[00:21:13] **Gary Illyes:** [00:21:13] I'm fairly certain that they shouldn't be that long.

[00:21:17] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:21:17] What makes you say that?

[00:21:18] **Gary Illyes:** [00:21:18] My assumption.

[00:21:19] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:21:19] You just have a gut feeling things should be shorter, more succinct, and if they are too long.

[00:21:27] **Gary Illyes:** [00:21:27] I think it would be worth looking into those tags and attributes, and see if they are still useful, because some of them have been replaced or not replaced, complemented, let say, with schema work, schema organizations like schema. What it's called? What's the name?

[00:21:48] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:21:48] Structure data, markers, schema, these are all fair words to be using.

[00:21:52] **Gary Illyes:** [00:21:52] So some of those things, some of those tags and attributes have structured data counterpart. And if they have a structure data counterparts, then maybe it's better to supply them in the structure data, because then all parsing in one place instead of two different places.

[00:22:11] Because usually, when you have it in two different places, then sometimes you might end up with conflicts. For example, the sitemap is generated offline, not when the page is rendered, so it might have a different value for a tag,
but technically, the structured data on the page should pull this, be the up-to-date version, I guess...

[00:22:33] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:22:33] That makes sense.

[00:22:34] **Gary Illyes:** [00:22:34] Because that happens when you actually render the page or pull the data from your database for the page. So maybe some of those texts could go.

[00:22:43] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:22:43] So maybe we should go check with the video team and see if all they need is the structured data, and see if there's some tidying that we could do in the sitemap extensions.

[00:22:54] **Gary Illyes:** [00:22:54] I mean video team, Google Images team, and probably also, Sitemaps Maps team, because we also have to figure out, if at all is possible, to their code to deprecated these tags.

[00:23:04] **John Mueller:** [00:23:04] I imagine that's somewhat of a longer process, anyway. Kind of especially if--I imagine it won't be that the sitemap file will stop working, it's just like we will primarily pull the data from the markup on the page. And then it's more like we work well together with the team. And then we work together with the ecosystem to know about the change early on so that they can update if they want to.

[00:23:30] Because I imagine a lot of the sitemap generators out there. They haven't been touched in many years. Because they just work. And why would you change it if it's working?

[00:23:40] **Gary Illyes:** [00:23:40] What do you think about a future of sitemaps? Should we transform them into JSON objects, for example, because everyone loves JSON?

[00:23:48] **John Mueller:** [00:23:48] Everybody likes Jason? I don't know how Jason feels about that.

[00:23:52] **Gary Illyes:** [00:23:52] Not that Jason... oh. Wrong Jason.

[00:23:56] **John Mueller:** [00:23:56] Yeah, I don't know. I kind of feel, on the one hand, XML is really ancient format, so it's kind of weird to keep using, but it kind of just works for this purpose, especially about informing search engines or
anyone who's interested in a website what the pages are on the website.

[00:24:15] I don't know what the future will be. There's the initiative, I think, from Bing and some other search engines about index now, where you submit individual pages, There's the indexing API from our site, where you also submit individual pages.

[00:24:31] Maybe it's some point things will transition in that direction, but I don't know, I still kind of find the process of crawling websites useful to understand the websites a little bit better.

[00:24:40] So I don't want to move to a model people don't understand what their website is actually like when it's crawled, and they just submit pages whenever they think this page is interesting.

[00:24:51] It should still be something that is crawlable and that kind of maps to what users see as well. Because if the website is crawlable, then users can also click around and find the content. And that's ultimately kind of the important part. You guide people to a part of a website and they should be able to dig deeper from there and find out more. So Gary, what do you think about the future of sitemaps?

[00:23:52] **Gary Illyes:** [00:23:52] I'm very fond of sitemaps, but I also want to see things evolve a little. But I also don't like JSON, because JSON Is weird.

[00:25:27] **John Mueller:** [00:25:27] I think there're two possible directions that could happen.

[00:25:31] On the one hand, you could just submit a text file of the URLs from your site, where basically we say, all of these attributes have been super useful. You should just give us a list of the URLs and that might be one approach.

[00:25:45] The other approach--that I don't know if index now uses this or indexing API--could be what you actually submit the pages themselves kind of directly.

[00:25:56] So it's not that search engine would have to crawl your web page to find the information there, but rather that the information is together with the submission. My feeling is that will be trickier, because it adds an extra layer of complexity, and it's easier to get those two sites out of sync.

[00:26:17] You submit something to a search engine, and you have something different on your website for accidental reasons, or for spammy reasons, or whatever, but kind of that disconnect feels kind of tricky.

[00:26:30] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:30] Tricky for them or tricky for search engines?

[00:23:56] **John Mueller:** [00:23:56] I think both sides, because a search engine or anyone who is kind of consuming still has to look at the pages to confirm that, actually, this is reasonable.

[00:26:42] And at that point, you're crawling the page. So, what is the difference?

[00:26:30] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:30] We do get a lot of people writing in that seems to think that this is how

it should work, that they should just be able to send us this URL that we have an indexed. And there should just be a box for them to be upload. "Here is this URL. Google, please know about it." But it seems like it's more complex than that. That they might not know that. All these other things that they should be thinking about.

[00:27:06] **Gary Illyes:** [00:27:06] I mean that could be a good topic for a future episode where we talk about what gets into our crawl cues and what does not, because it is way more complicated than just submitting a sitemap.

[00:27:18] Basically, with a sitemap, you are just telling any search engine that your URLs are here. You do whatever you want with them. You're not instructing that you want these crawled.

[00:27:30] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:27:30] Or not crawled.

[00:27:31] **Gary Illyes:** [00:27:31] Well, with sitemaps, you cannot say not crawled. You use robots.txt for that, right? Oh, look, we build a complete loop.

[00:27:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:27:38] Full circle.

[00:27:40] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:27:42] **John Mueller:** [00:27:42] And that's it for this episode. Thanks for joining us here folks. Next time on Search Off the Record, we'll be talking about the future of the web with Alan Kent. We've been having fun with these episodes and I hope you, the listener, have found them entertaining and insightful as well. Feel free to drop me a note on Twitter or chat with us at one of the next virtual or in-person events that we go to if you have any thoughts. And of course, don't forget to like and subscribe. Thank you and goodbye!

[00:28:14] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:28:14] Bye now.

[00:28:16] **Gary Illyes:** [00:28:16] Goodbye.

[00:28:16] ♪ [music] ♪