



Figure 2-1: The Google Toolbar affords a rough glimpse of any site's PageRank, on a scale of 0 to 10.

The Google PageRank is like a carrot dangled before the ambitious gaze of Webmasters, who devote considerable energy to inching their pages up to a higher PageRank, thereby moving them up the search results list. Chapter 3 is devoted to improving your site's ranking and position on search results pages.

Search engine integrity

One reason pre-Google search engines declined in usefulness and popularity as Web-content portals was the emergence of paid listings. Hungry for revenue, some engines sold positions on the search results page to advertisers. This dilution of objectivity polluted search results and undermined the essential democracy of the Web. The distinction blurred between search engines, which supposedly located what *you* wanted, and browser channels, which sent you to the browser's business affiliates. Even though many search engines did not accept paid placement, distrust grew among users.

Google started a renaissance of utility and trust. Google's integrity is symbolized by its gunk-free home page, the spartan design of which lures the user with the promise of search, and nothing but search. To be sure, Google accepts advertising, and Parts II and III of this book are all about Google ads. But Google's paid content is clearly separated from search listings. Not everyone agrees with the ranking of search results in Google, but nobody thinks that a high rank can be bought.