Kagi: The New Kid on the Block?

March 30, 2024

What I noticed after switching to Kagi, a paid search engine: result quality, search lenses, utility features, and the company behind it.

Status: finished

I recently switched to using Kagi as my main search engine. As of when this blog post is written, their charge for individual accounts is $10 per month. Considering how we've been spoilt by the likes of Google and DuckDuckGo: is paying so much for search actually worth it? I've not made up my mind about this; however, I do have to say that Kagi is slowly growing on me. In this post, I will list the stuff about Kagi I've observed over the course of using it.

Search Results

Kagi has been quite good at giving me the results I want. In fact, it gave me quite interesting links that Google and DuckDuckGo did not give me. For example, I was searching for the background behind "What Andy Giveth, Bill Taketh Away" and Kagi gave me the wiki link first, but within the relevant links, it put Wirth's Law right there where I could see it. Other search engines also included it but not at the same rank. This is of course just one example, but there have been multiple instances where Kagi has ranked relevent pages far better than others.

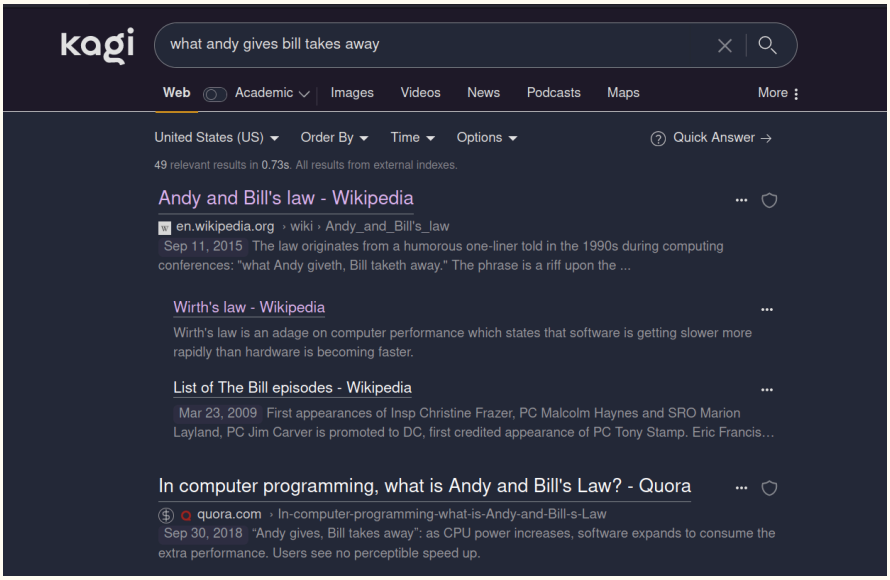


Figure 1: Kagi's results for the Andy and Bill's law search. Wirth's law is listed right under the first result.

Search Lens

Now this is an interesting feature I have not observed on other services before. Kagi give you the option of searching for something under a specific Lens. For example, I can search for a topic, say "How do Prions start folding incorrectly" and make it so that it gives me results from academic sources. Currently, it gives the options to use Fediverse Forums, News 360, Usenet/Archive, Kagi Documentation, Academic, Forums, Programming, PDFs by default. The best part is: You can create your own!

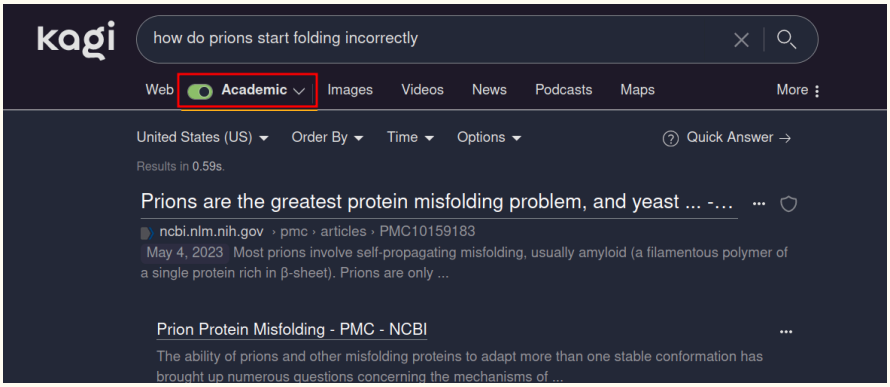


Figure 2: The Academic lens switched on for a search about prions.

Utility Features

Now since Google, and to some extent DuckDuckGo, offer features which directly answer your questions (like currency converion, time at place, etc), does Kagi do the same? I mean, kinda? It does somethings since Kagi recently integrated WolframAlpha into their platform so we get complex math features like so:

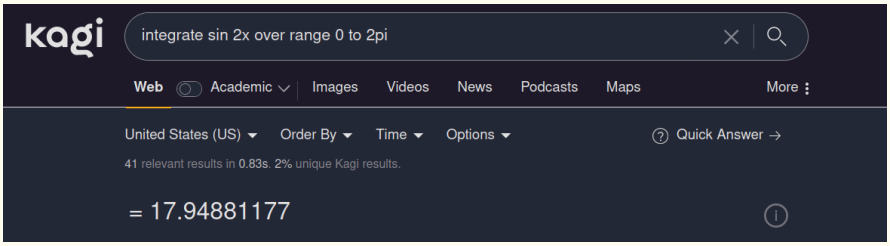


Figure 3: A math question answered above the search results.

Wolfram Alpha covers most similar stuff like Currency Conversion as well, but what about temperature?

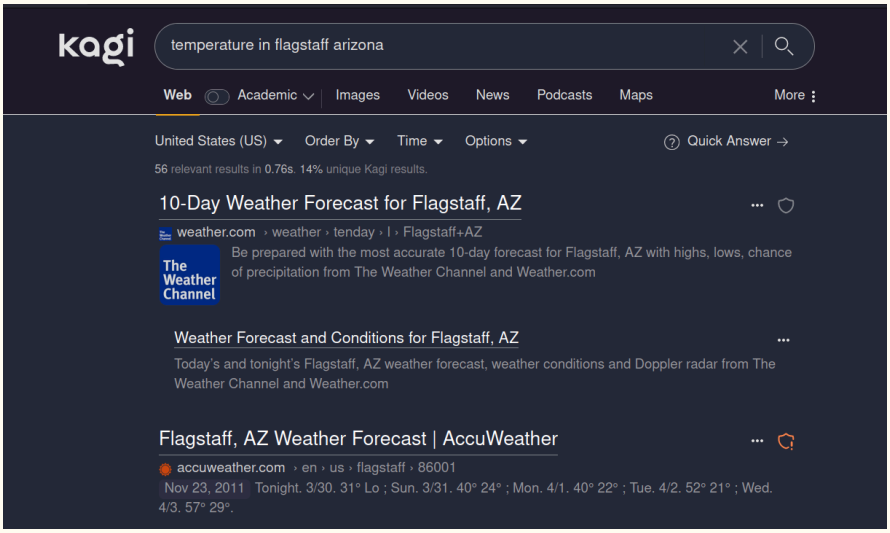


Figure 4: A temperature search returns web pages and no direct answer.

Nope, a pretty basic feature which is still not present. Probably some other features like this are lacking, you can find out based on features you use on other search engines.

Misc Features

Kagi has some security feature which scans each search result. This can be accessed by clicking the shield icon after each search result. Most other services offer similar service so nothing special here. Maybe they offer a bit

more in-depth analysis of each site? I don't know, I use my own wits to see if a website is worth clicking on. Hey, it's worked for me so far.

Things about Kagi I don't like

Well, the product alone is fine. It has a few rough edges but that's a given considering it's relatively new. However, the people behind them have done some "interesting" stuff. They raised $670k through multiple small investors and then proceeded to utilize one-thirds of that to giving away free tshirts to their first 20000 customers? I mean, I get they are appreciating their customers but spending so much money so early on for just that? It has raised some eyebrows for sure.

They have their own browser in the Apple ecosystem which is pretty buggy. I assume the reasoning behind it is that Safari does not include Kagi as a Search enginer choice (yet) and their extension whichs works around this issue is not really privacy friendly. Building and maintaining a good browser is not easy, and it is not cheap. If Apple decided to include Kagi as a Search Engine choice, maybe Kagi should let go of their own browser and focus on their search engine.

Conclusion

Kagi is a good product. However, given the rise of LLMs like ChatGPT, Claude and search focused products like Perplexity.ai, it is only a test of time if Kagi will survive the onslaught of the AI arms race. It is unfortunate timing for Kagi to have set up shop during but I think they are doing the right things so hopefully it all works out for them.