

The Great Internet Validity Quest

The Epic Struggle to Discern Integrity,
Timeliness, and Relevance on the
Internet

URL Unfurled

- Personal Pages: often contain names, like gmiller, or words like "people" or "users". No domain name or publisher to establish validity.
- Domain Names: includes government, nonprofit, educational and commercial. Information source should reflect relevancy to your topic.
- Logic of Publishing Entity: is the website mounted on the publisher's server? Server is usually named in the initial portion of the url. Are publisher and site name the same?

Cruise for Clues

- Webpage analysis includes examining links purported to reveal information about the site producer(s), like "About us," "Philosophy," and "Background."
- Truncate the url backwards, slash by slash, to unearth the publisher responsible for the web content. Is it also the author?
- Establish authorship: individual, organization, agency, or institution. Emails alone are inadequate to assess authors credibility.

That Musty Smell and the Credential Quest

- How recently was site updated and how time-sensitive is your topic?
- In the case of historical research, was site established concurrently with events under analysis?
- Author status: scholar, expert, scam-artist, hobbyist, conspiracy-freak, zealot, ghost writer? Perform a credential search. Author often hyperlinked within journal databases. Google search. OCLC's First Search. Citation indexes.

Quality is Our Middle Name

- Examine “links,” “additional sites,” and “related sites”.
- Explore footnotes links within the text. Are they from reputable publications, and, more importantly, do they really exist?
- If article from a journal, was it mounted on the publisher's website, or, possibly, illegally re-produced? Look for copyright and permissions information.

Show Us Your Documentation

- Scholarly research is inherently obligated to document and footnote sources with indisputable accuracy, or work falls into the category of opinion.
- Examine footnotes for accuracy and scholarly origin.
- Is information from other sources complete and unadulterated? If re-typed, why not linked directly if permissions granted?
- Are links to other websites organized, evaluated or annotated and are links to unbiased information representing alternative viewpoints?

Alexa and the Wayback Machine

- Alexa.com will reveal who links to the website under scrutiny.
- Includes traffic volume and "related links" to other sites the same users visited.
- Contains website contact/ownership information.
- "Wayback Machine" reveals snapshots of previous iterations of the website.
- Type "link" in Google and website address to reveal all pages that contain links to website you are investigating.

Compile the Clues and Contemplate

- What is the purpose of the website: informative facts and data, explanatory and persuasive with a hidden or overt agenda, alluring and enticing with a monetary game plan, selfless sharing of information, or an expose or disclosure.
- Tone of the page: ironic, satirical, parody, hyperbolic, absurd, angry, logical, technical.
- Is material as relevant, timely, and accurate as print and subscription electronic resources available through the library?
- Keith Stanger's compilation of websites with dubious unbiased validity: <http://keithstanger.com/evalsite.htm>
- Beyond copyright: Dr. Michael Wesch's "The Machine is Us/ing Us" (Final version):
http://youtube.com/watch?v=NLIgopyXT_g
Will the new paradigm of Web 2.0 supplant the traditional scholarly process?

Remote Access to PPCC Resources

- Go to: <http://www.ppcc.edu>
- Select: About PPCC
- Select: Library
- Select: Library Catalog/PPCC Login to access print and/or electronic resources.
- Select: Databases to access electronic journal databases only.
- Login: last name and last 4 digits of your S number.
- Password: month and day of your birthday; 4 digits.
- Select: Serials Solutions to locate a journal's location within a particular database.
- Federated Search: Query all databases simultaneously.
Warning, voluminous hits!