

Worth A Closer Look? Website Evaluation Revisited

Part One

From coding to content:
first looks at website evaluation.

ECIS Annual Conference

Nice, November 2000.

John Royce : Library Director : Robert College

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Avoiding myth-takes.

- If it's on the web it must be true.
- If it's on the web it must be up-to-date.
- If it's on the web it's just what I need.
- If it's **NOT** on the web it's not worth having.

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Types of Information

- **information** (factual, clearly sourced, reliable, quality)
- **misinformation** (false, out-of-date, inaccurate, incomplete)
- **malinformation** (potentially dangerous or damaging information, inappropriate information)
- **messed up information** (poorly organized & presented)
- **useless information** (though one man's trash may be another person's treasure)

Nicholas Burbules. *Struggling with the internet*; quoted by Ross Todd, *From net surfers to net seekers*, 1998)

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Traditional Evaluation Criteria (Print)

- Accuracy
- Authority
- Coverage
- Objectivity
- Currency

The filter factor

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The World Wide Web (WWW)

- quality very variable
- anyone can publish anything
- not always clear who or why

What filter factor?

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First steps

- Know what you already know
- Know what you are looking for
- Know what what-you-are-looking-for looks like
- Know where to look
- Know how to look

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Of search engines & directories

- internet tools to help you locate information
- search engines are automated; directories are driven by humans
- results will vary according to which search engine you use and how effectively you use it
- different search engines use different techniques to locate information
- search engines do not have access to every web page in the world – perhaps 0.002% of web pages worldwide can be found through searches

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Search tools

Search Engines & Directories

- Yahoo
- Lycos
- Webcrawler
- Excite
- HotBot
- InfoSeek
- Google
- AltaVista
- Northern Light

Meta-Search Engines

- AskJeeves
- DogPile
- Inference Find
- MetaCrawler
- MetaSearch
- Search
- Ixquick
- Lexibot

Note: SearchEngines.com has lots of useful information and tips about most popular search engines.

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Use the clues

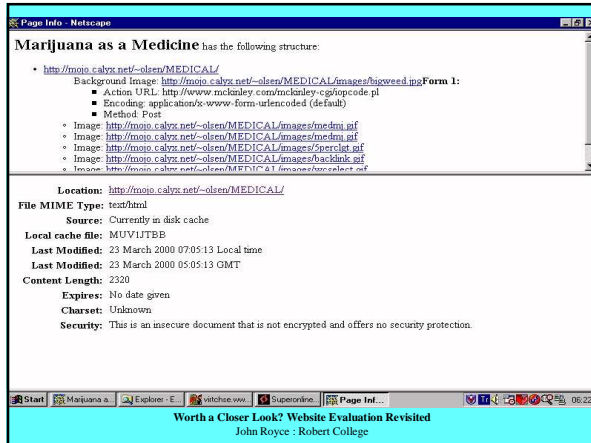
- **Document title / Page title**
- **Organization**
- **Date of posting**
- **First lines**
- **Author/s**
- **Address / URL**

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URLy warning signs

- .com
- .co.uk
- .org
- .gov
- .k12
- .edu
- .ac.nz
- .net
- .ca
- .au
- .de
- .uk
- .it
-
- ~name

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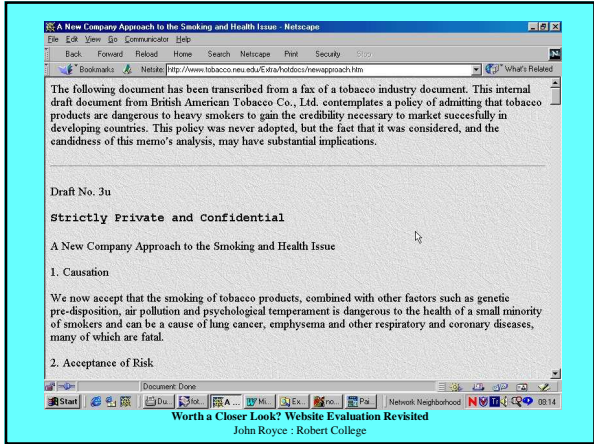


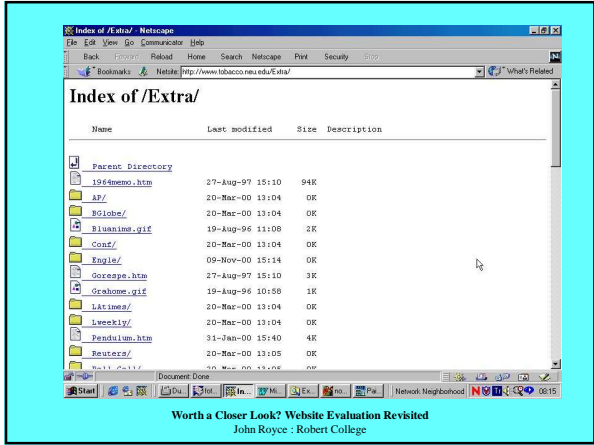
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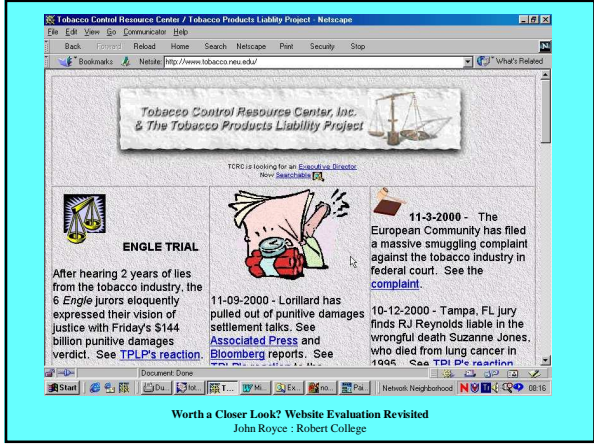
WWW problem areas

- **Authority & accuracy** : who wrote the page? qualifications? publisher? editorial control?
- **Objectivity** : purpose or goals?
- **Coverage** : how comprehensive is the coverage? how accurate? Is it true?
- **Currency** : are there dates? what do they mean?
- **Permanence** : URL? Site / Page names? Stability?
- **Design** : a case of “Never mind the quality, just feel the bandwidth”?

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The H*O*T*S

- Develop checklists.
- Many documents will fail to meet all criteria.
- There is nothing wrong with bias as long as one is aware of it!

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The internet is just another resource

- Useful but be wary.
- Good for some topics, useless for others.
- Use a variety of sources, web and non-web.
- Use the feedback option.
- Always try to verify your information, don't rely on just one source or hit.

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a bushel of salt

**Check
Check
Check again**

VERIFY!

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<http://vm.robcol.k12.tr/~jroyce/index.html>

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