

Worth A Closer Look? Website Evaluation Revisited

Part Two

Website evaluation
in the classroom.

ECIS Annual Conference

Nice, November 2000.

John Royce : Library Director : Robert College

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Web Site Evaluation

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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The World Wide Web (WWW)

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

No filter factor.

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Who said that?

**“If the English language
was good enough
for Jesus Christ,
then it's good enough for me.”**

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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 nature of knowledge

**How can you evaluate
the accuracy of information
if you don't have
the necessary background knowledge
to prove, disprove, or assess it?**

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The Knowledge Base

Fitzgerald, Mary Ann. Evaluating Information: An Information Literacy Challenge. *School Library Media Research*, Vol 2, 1999.

<http://www.ala.org/aas/SLMR/evaluating.html>

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Commonplaces

- Purpose
- Motivation
- Accountability

"If motivation increases evaluation accuracy through the deliberate avoidance of flawed thinking patterns, I propose it is fair to assume that lack of motivation may decrease evaluation accuracy." (Fitzgerald)

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Maturity

- Elementary school age children can detect inconsistencies and falsehoods, especially if forewarned.
- Lack of (prior) knowledge and a respect for authority may prevent adequate evaluation.

Fitzgerald.

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Stability << >> Fluidity of knowledge

- Awareness of increasing complexity
- Awareness of other possibilities
- Knowing requires effort on the part of the knower
- Knowledge changes, our knowledge changes
- Starts in adolescence; not everyone changes/ learns

Fitzgerald.

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Knowledge conflicts

- A disclaimer may be insufficient to deter
- Initial impressions (first in, last out)
- Recency
- People seek information which supports their beliefs
- People find information which supports their beliefs

Fitzgerald.

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Evaluation Failure: fooling all of the people...

"People do not always apply evaluative strategies in situations that seem to require evaluation." (Fitzgerald)

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Information Literacy Skills

"Evaluation skills are easily integrated into curricula. It is vitally important that information literacy skills in general and these strategies in particular be taught in the context of subject matter material." (Fitzgerald)

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Teaching strategies (1) after Fitzgerald

- Repeat, reinforce & build – once is not enough.
- Not possible to evaluate all information.
- Break new skills into smaller parts, base in familiar contexts.
- Find problems (eg. Inconsistency, exaggeration) on daily basis.

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Teaching strategies (2) after Fitzgerald

- Ensure that cause is clear.
- Practice formal argumentation, produce evidence, argue from the opposite side.
- Perform research regularly and intensely.
- Produce different types of product.

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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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