
Who am I?

- University of Bristol, UK
- Institute for Learning and Research Technology
- SOSIG - UK Electronic Libraries Programme
- DESIRE - EU Telematics for Research

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Questioning the Quality of Internet Information

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On the Internet ...

anyone can publish anything

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People use the Internet at **work** and at **home**

Communication
information exchange
publishing information
recreation

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All of human life is there ...

teaching

learning

buying

selling

working

relaxing

debating

gossiping

falling in love !

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So we see all kinds of resources :

books

journals

databases

Home pages

FAQs

Email archives

businesses

shops

churches !

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So forget the library metaphor!

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What can librarians do about quality?

- Create quality controlled collections
- provide user education on Internet quality

A definition of quality

- “A high quality Internet resource is one that meets the information needs of the user”

Scope Policy

- Defining acceptable ...
- types of resource
- subject matter
- costs
- technologies
- languages / geographical origins

Quality criteria

CONTENT

Validity

Accuracy

Authority

Uniqueness

Substantiveness

Completeness

Coverage

FORM

Technologies

Navigation

User support

INTEGRITY

Information

Site

System

It pays to think like a detective

- Look for clues
- ask questions
- consider the motives of people publishing on the Internet
- trust nothing and nobody until you have good cause to do so



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Content

On the Internet
anyone can publish anything

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Form

The way that resources
appear and can be accessed
will vary

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Process

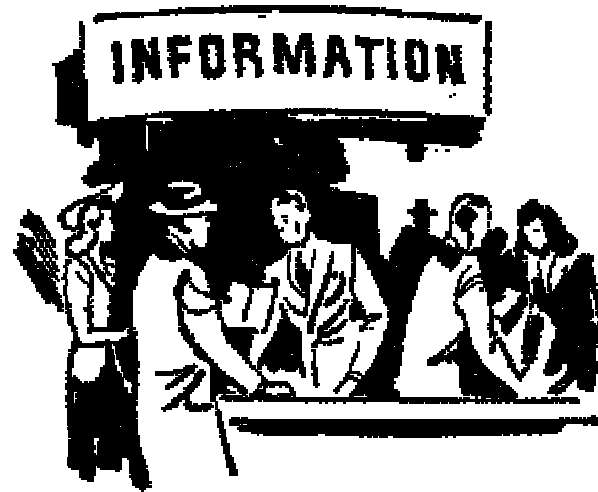
Internet resources are
volatile

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Validity

- anyone can publish anything
- information has often not been filtered by a third party
- things may not always be what they seem



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Accuracy

- innocent error
- outright deception

- lack of information filters:
 - commercial publishers
 - editors
 - proof readers
 - peer reviewers



Authority and reputation of the source



- the source may not always be made explicit
- it may not be correctly attributed
- no one has vetted the source - it's up to you!

Uniqueness

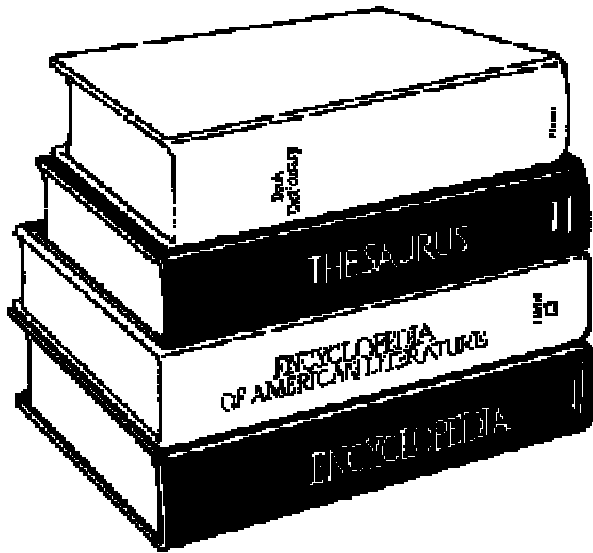
- many sites don't contain any primary information
- some lists of links may have value added



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Substantiveness



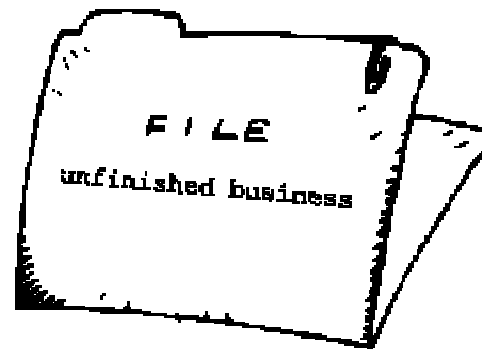
- you need to establish the parameters of the resource - how big is the site?

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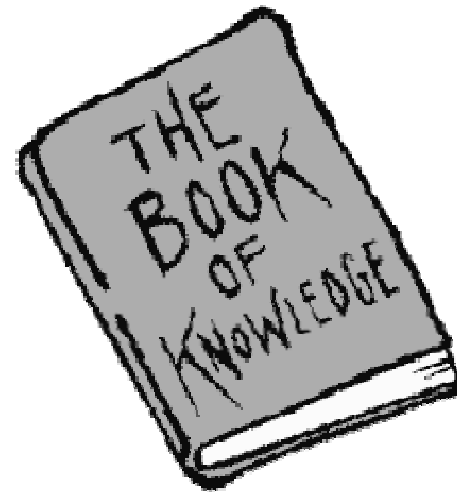
Completeness

- Many sites are “under construction”
- people publish work in progress
- people publish “tasters” to try and make you buy



Coverage

- designing in hypertext is different from writing a book
- lots of “bite sized” information
- may be gaps in the information



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Examples of content issues

- Electronic Telegraph
- Degree Mills
- Connexions
- People against poodles

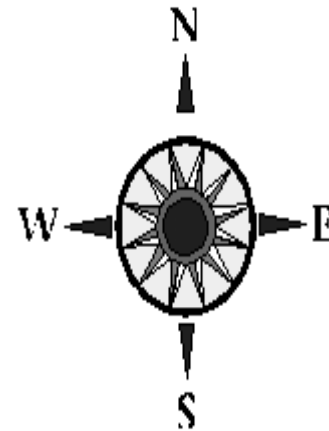
Form criteria

Focus on

- presentation and organisation
- the interface

Navigation features

- resources are two dimensional and screen-shaped!
- need physical clues to help us find our way around



User support



- users may be remote but they still need help
- 24 hour Internet access = different types of support needed

Appropriate technologies



- Access and appearance depends on:
 - hardware
 - software
 - standards used
 - technologies used

Examples of form issues

- Frames
- texts divided into many files

Process criteria

Focus on...

- the volatile nature of Internet resources
- the system between provider and user

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Processing the Information

- The work of the author or information provider
- Content can be
 - updated
 - expanded,
 - superceded
 - archived
 - deleted



Processing the Site



- The work of the site manager/Web master
- Changes are made to:
 - URL addresses
 - file structures
 - formats
 - interfaces

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Processing the system

- The work of the systems administrator
- things that can “go down”
 - the server
 - the network



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Examples of Process criteria

- changes to file structures - and URLs
- server problems

International Collaboration

- **DESIRE**
 - a European network of gateways
 - workshops in 1999

- **ROADS**

Please get in touch :-)

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- marianne@python.konbib.nl

- <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/europe.html>
- <http://www.konbib.nl/dutchess/>
- <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/>
- <http://www.sosig.ac.uk/desire/internet-detective.html>