Who am I?

- University of Bristol, UK
- Institute for Learning and Research Technology
- SOSIG - UK Electronic Libraries Programme
- DESIRE - EU Telematics for Research
Questioning the Quality of Internet Information
On the Internet …

anyone can publish anything
People use the Internet at work and at home.

Communication
information exchange
publishing information
recreation
All of human life is there ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>teaching</th>
<th>learning</th>
<th>buying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>selling</td>
<td>working</td>
<td>relaxing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debating</td>
<td>gossiping</td>
<td>falling in love!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So we see all kinds of resources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>books</th>
<th>journals</th>
<th>databases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home pages</td>
<td>FAQs</td>
<td>Email archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>businesses</td>
<td>shops</td>
<td>churches!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So forget the library metaphor!
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>INTEGRITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>Technologies</td>
<td>Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Navigation</td>
<td>Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>User support</td>
<td>System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substantiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completeness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coverage</td>
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</table>

The Institute for Learning and Research Technology is a national centre of excellence in the development and use of technology-based methods in teaching, learning and research.
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
On the Internet anyone can publish anything
Form

The way that resources appear and can be accessed will vary
Process

Internet resources are volatile
Validity

• anyone can publish anything

• information has often not been filtered by a third party

• things may not always be what they seem
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?
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
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
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
Processing the system

- The work of the systems administrator

- things that can “go down”
  - the server
  - the network
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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