

Finding Information on the Web II

CS 102

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Name(s)

Introduction

The purpose of this lab is to sensitize you to the issues of the uses of information. Virtually anyone can publish on the Internet and get their pages indexed by a search engine. Not everything you find is worthwhile — you should be critical of everything you see. Ask yourself: Does the author/sponsor of this site have a hidden agenda? Are they trying to get me to think a certain way? Are they selling to me? Do they know what they're talking about, or are they merely trying to pass themselves off as an expert? Is the information fresh or is it stale?

Lab

1. Break into medium-sized groups: 4–6. Choose someone to lead the discussion and someone else to record the results of the discussion.
2. First, discuss the “hidden agendas” of Internet publishers. What categories of motivation exist? A few ideas to get you started: sales/marketing, propaganda, and fame. Expand these and develop your own list.

Answer:

3. Develop a list of issues other than hidden agendas of which to be aware. For example, how recent the information is and whether or not you can even determine who published it.

Answer:

4. As a group, brainstorm strategies for attacking the issues you identified in the previous two steps. In other words, how would knowing about these issues affect how you evaluate Web sites?

Answer:

5. Develop your set of strategies into a unified strategy that you can apply to online information. You might want to throw out some of your strategies, rank the remaining ones, and develop a checklist. Or, you may have a better idea; use it!

Answer:

6. Compare your group's evaluation strategy against the strategies described in:
 - (a) Evaluating Information Found on the Internet
<http://www.library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/evaluating/index.html>
 - (b) Evaluating Internet Resources
<http://library.albany.edu/internet/evaluate.html>