TITLE: Tools and Precision of a User Perspective
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ABSTRACT: A response/presentation on tools and the credibility of Internet information from the user perspective presented at a symposium co-sponsored by ALA, the University of Washington and the MacArthur Foundation. Looks at the differentiating factors of Internet information.
KEYWORDS: credibility, web, tools, software
Tools and Precision of a User Perspective

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What’s the Problem

- Not is Credibility a Problem...
  - Credibility in Print, Art, Other
- Differentiating Conditions
- Goal is Precision in Discussion
Differentiating the Internet

Not Digital Information

- Digital Information is Not Confined to the Internet
- Digital Information can be MORE Secure/Credible than Analogs
- Encryption: The Padlock Icon as a GREAT Advance

Not the Network

- Networks Exist in Many Modes (Social, Professional, Technical)
- Any Network Must, at Some Level, to Assure Credibility
The Normalization of the Internet

- Early Internet as a “Social Closed” Network: all Information Seen as Credible
- New Media/Experimental Era: All Information Suspect - Few Traditional Credibility Clues
- Now: Introduction of Traditional Players and Consumer Attitudes re-Introduces Common Means of Determining Credibility
  - Credibility Research Presented as Media Choice ... There is Less and Less Choice Each Day
Significant Differentiators

- Increased Ability for “Self Service”
  - Greater Integration of Users into Systems
- Nature of Peer Tools
  - Tools without Central Authorities
Increased Desire for Self-Service (OCLC Scan) Leads to a Greater Obligation for Literacy of all Types

In a Self-Service/Self-Selection Driven World All Authority Becomes Advisory, All Credibility Situational
Means of Assuring Users

- **Tool**: Content Free Devices used to Manipulate Information
- **Design**: Intellectual Constructs of a Creator Meant to Convey Meaning
- **Education**: An Active Process of Information Interchange Guided by a Larger (in this case) Objective
Paper Issues

- Assuring Users of Credibility is not a User Perspective, Because Someone Else is Doing to Assuring
  - Institutions, Authors, Authorities, etc.

- The Papers Concentrated on Design, and Institutional Perspectives
  - Design of Web Sites is a Source/Content Function
    - Source, Message, Medium
  - Design Principles Only Present the Perception of Credibility, Can be Misused - QuestionPoint Knowledge Base Example
Paper Issues, Cont.

One to One, One to Many, Many to Many

- Many to Many Does not Make Sense in User Context ... There is Only One User
- Need Many to One
  - RSS Syndication, Search Engines, Aggregators
Tools

- Awareness Tools (to Spur User Examination)
  - Tool Kits, Certifications
- Encryption
- Identity Management
  - Individual/Organizational
- Annotations
  - Peer, Expert, User, Audit Trail
An Answer to Credibility in Tools

“Deductive” Network with High Control

- Elegant and Efficient
- AOL, Prodigy, Intranets

The Success of the Internet is Inductive (and Imperfections)

- 404 as Quality Control
Diversity as Means to Credibility

- Spam control through Inductive Systems
  - Bayesian, Neural Nets
- User Aggregation Tools
  - Rise of Natural Language Processing, User Profiles
- Adaptive “Co-Pilots”
Bias in an Inductive Network

- Traditional Concepts of Bias are Deductive and Driven by Traditional Mediums
- If, Credibility is (a) Situational and (b) Driven by Users’ Current Knowledge/ Beliefs then Bias is Situational as Well
- Furthermore, in a Diverse and Large Information Space, One Can Assume Neutrality with “Biased” Nodes