



## A Web Site

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Burmese Mountain Dog

Information: Truth or Fiction?



How do you know?



## The “Credibility” Problem

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- ❖ The Web is comprised of over a billion Web pages
- ❖ These Web pages are written by several million individuals
  - ❑ Professional Web designers
  - ❑ Scientists, doctors, lawyers and other professionals
  - ❑ High school students
  - ❑ General public
- ❖ There are no controls for:
  - ❑ Who publishes on the Web
  - ❑ What is published on the Web
  - ❑ The quality of information published on the Web

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## The “Credibility” Problem

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- ❖ These billion Web pages are searched by several hundred million users
  
- ❖ **THE BIG QUESTION:** How does a user know which Web sites to believe?

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## The BIG Question

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### ❖ How does a user know which Web sites to believe?

- ❖ Take out a piece of paper. Write your name on it.
- ❖ Answer this question for yourself.
- ❖ (I'll collect these at the end of class today. These won't be graded.)

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## What Do People Think Makes Them Think a Web Site Provides Credible Information?

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- ❖ According to BJ Fogg and his colleagues (2001) at Stanford University...
  - ❑ Conducted a survey on the Web with 51 items
  - ❑ 1441 people completed the survey
  - ❑ Gender: 44% female; 56% male
  - ❑ Median age: 33 years
  - ❑ Roughly half from US; half from Finland
  - ❑ Average years online: 3.7 years
  - ❑ Average hours online per week: 13.9 hours

Fogg, BJ, et al. (2001). What makes Web sites credible? A report on a large quantitative study. Conference Proceedings of CHI 2001 (pp. 61 – 68). NY, New York: The ACM Press.

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## Evidence of Connecting to a Real Person or Organization...

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- ❖ Evidence of Connecting to a Real Person/Organization
  - ❑ Site provides a quick response to a user/sends you an email confirming a transaction you've made
  - ❑ Site lists the organization's physical address
  - ❑ Site gives a contact phone number
  - ❑ Site gives a contact email address

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## Ease of Use, Expertise...

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- ❖ Ease of Use
  - ❑ Site lets you search past content (archival information)
  - ❑ Site is arranged in a way that makes sense to you
  
- ❖ Evidence of Expertise
  - ❑ Site lists authors' credentials
  - ❑ Site lists citations and references

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## Trustworthiness, Currency...

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- ❖ Evidence of Trustworthiness
  - ❑ Site is linked to by a site you think is believable (cf. Google)
  - ❑ Site states its policy on content
  - ❑ Site links to outside material and sources
  - ❑ Site represents an organization you respect
  
- ❖ Evidence of Currency
  - ❑ Site has is frequently updated

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## Restrained Commercialism and Professionalism

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- ❖ Restrained Commercialism
  - ❑ Site makes it easy to distinguish ads from content
  - ❑ Site doesn't automatically pop up windows with ads
  
- ❖ Professionalism
  - ❑ Site has no typographical errors
  - ❑ Site is always available
  - ❑ All of the links work

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## Summary

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- ❖ Not all information is equal – some information is better (more credible) than other information
- ❖ There's a lot of information on the Web, created by millions of people, with no checks on the quality of the information
- ❖ The quality of information on Web sites can be evaluated by criteria such as: source, accuracy, completeness, and currency
- ❖ “Cues” to these criteria can be exploited to create Web sites that appear credible even when they are not
- ❖ We are judging two sorts of things:
  - ❑ The information provided on a site
  - ❑ The person or organization represented by a site
- ❖ The bottom-line: Information user beware!

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