

## Why Do We Search for Information?

- Information is that which reduces uncertainty in our lives
  - ☐ One could say, then, that misinformation can be information (temporarily) because it can reduce uncertainty for someone at the time-even if it isn't correct
- Information gives us a deeper understanding of the world or changes our knowledge on some topic
  - ☐ Misinformation may give us a skewed view of the world
  - ☐ But remember, information to one person/culture may be misinformation to another
- We have an immediate need for information
  - ☐ A research paper, a project, etc.

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# Where do we go to find the Information we need?

- Our friends
- An expert
- A bookstore
  - □ Either in person or through the web
- The library
  - □ Again, either in person or through the web (e.g. UW Gateway)
- The Internet
  - □ Search Engines (Google)
  - □ Directories (Yahoo)

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## What is Truth? Knowledge?

- Truth to you may be fiction to a person in another class, another culture, another city, etc.
- Knowledge?
  - ☐ One definition could be:

Justified True Belief

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- You decide to go to the Web to get your information
- The Web consists of billions of Web pages
- These Web pages are written by several million individuals
  - □ Professional Web Designers
  - □ Researchers, doctors, scientists, lawyers and other professionals
  - ☐ High school students, elementary school students
  - ☐ General Public
- Who decides what gets published? Nobody.
  - ☐ If you have access to web server space and an IP address-you're on!
  - ☐ There are no controls for who publishes, what is published or the quality of the content put out on the Web

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#### Information or Misinformation?

The billions of pages that are out there are searched by several hundred million users

#### Question:

How does a user know which sites to believe?

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### What is Credibility?

- According to BJ Fogg and his research partners at Stanford, credibility is a perception based on 2 factors:
  - □ Trustworthiness and Expertise http://www.webcredibility.org/
- Highly credible web sites have high levels of perceived trustworthiness and expertise
- Different kinds of credibility:
  - □ Presumed
  - □ Reputed
  - □ Surface
  - □ Experienced

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# What do People think makes a web site credible?

- In 2001, a report\* was released by BJ Fogg and his colleagues from Stanford University
  - □ Web survey results were studied to identify what is people think makes them think a web site provides credible information
  - ☐ The results broke down into the following categories...

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

# Is anybody there or am I just talking to myself?

- Evidence that they are connecting to a real person or organization...
  - □ Site provides quick response to users (e.g. sending an email to confirm a transaction)
  - □ Physical address is listed
  - □ Phone number is listed
  - □ Fmail address is listed

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## Ease of Use and Show of Expertise

- Ease of Use
  - ☐ Ability to search archives (past content)
  - ☐ Arranged in a way that makes sense to you
- Evidence of Expertise
  - ☐ Site lists the authors credentials
  - ☐ Site lists citations and references

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## Trustworthiness, Currency...

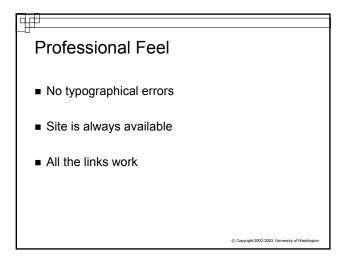
- Evidence of trustworthiness in a web site
  - □ Linked to by a site you think is believable
  - ☐ States its policy on content
  - □ Represents an organization you respect
- Evidence of Currency
  - □ Site is frequently updated

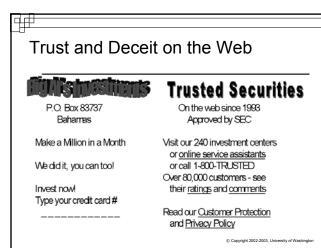
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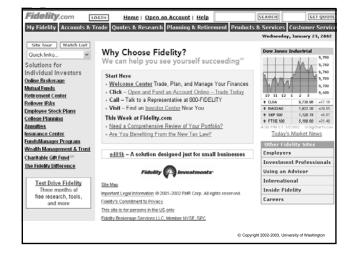
### No More Ads, PLEASE!

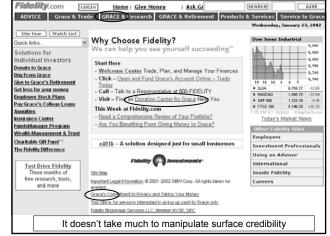
- Commercialism of the site is at a minimum
  - □ It is easy to distinguish ads from content
  - $\hfill\square$  No automatic pop up windows with ads

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## Trust online

- Researchers (Rand) checked out 6 health Web sites and 12 sites dedicated to specific diseases.
- How frequently Web sites are complete and accurate:

*	Breast cancer	63%
*	Depression	44%
*	Obesity	37%
*	Childhood asthma	33%

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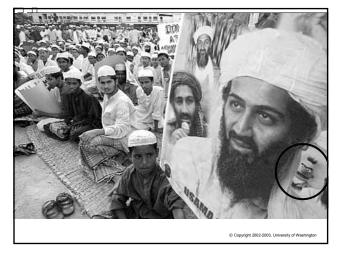
#

### Misunderstanding = Misinformation?

- One sees misinformation passed in many forms. Some might be:
  - □ Incorrect facts regarding historical information
    - But who writes history?
  - □ Inaccurate financial information related to "scams" and other shady business dealings
  - □ Gossip/Partial Facts
    - A fact starts out accurately and is slowly skewed each time it is repeated
  - ☐ Not enough depth to the coverage of the topic
  - □ Inaccurate associations based on lack of context (not understanding the environment) ....

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was an elaborate hoax. © Copyright 2002-2003, Ur

#### Truth or Fiction?

#### Rent-A-Stalker

http://www.coincidencedesign.com/

#### Aluminun Foil Deflector Beanie http://zapatopi.net/afdb.html

#### Pol Pot Exile

http://www.tass.net/

#### Aids Facts

http://147.129.1.10/library/research/AIDSFACTS.htm

#### Americans with No Abilities Act

http://www.theonion.com/onion3324/noabilities.html

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## Summary

- Information is NOT Democratic.
  - □ Not all equal
  - ☐ Some Information IS better than others (more credible)
- Take into consideration WHY you want the information when you go out to search for it
- Since there are no checks on general web content, if you REALLY need accuracy, double check it against other sources
- We have ways to evaluate sites using criteria covers all forms of credibility
  - ☐ But many of these can be exploited
- Misinformation spreads like wildfire, on and off the web
- We judge two things on sites:
  - $\hfill\Box$  The information provided
  - ☐ The person or organization represented

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