Information Literacy

Instructors who use extensive web resources may consider the incorporation of an assignment early in the class to have students evaluate the quality of information in web sites. On the next page is the example that is used in a course called ELO 100, which is an orientation course developed for prospective online students at Shelton State Community College.

The concept of information literacy would very applicable to any course which would have any of the following situations present:

- Individual students which involve any essays or papers which utilize web sites as points of reference. For example, there are several references in this web site to Wikipedia, which is often considered somewhat dubious by many academic people since it designed to be modified by users of the site. However, the information in the site has generally been accurate in the experience of this author but it does have a built in weakness of being easily modified and subject to verification of its base of users. Students could reference such sites as part of their class, but may want to include other resources to confirm the information found in these kinds of sites.

- Discussion boards and blogs which allow students to post sites for reference as part of the participation in the board or blog.

- Any groups which use web sites as part of a project or proposal.

The information literacy assignment could have three levels to it, which could be sequenced as follows:

- The instructor develops a bogus web site like the example shown below. The advantage of this approach is that the assessment can automated since the instructor can build in the parts of the site which are valid, partially correct and just plain or biased. The automated feedback will allow students to practice their literacy skills and get immediate feedback.

- The second stage of information literacy could involve students evaluating real life web sites which have built in bias known to the instructor. Instructors could have responses already developed to help develop the ability of students to evaluate web resources in more subjective situations.

- The third stage of this process could have students independently find and evaluate sites which are used as part of a project, essay or paper.
This pseudo web site was developed by Darrell Wright for an orientation class ELO 100 as part of Shelton State Community College Quality Enhancement Process.

It is deliberately designed to simulate questionable web sites with a bogus company name. The web site has the following characteristics of many web sites:

1. Factual information such as price, crash ratings and EPA gas mileage.

2. Stories (the lemons story) which sound plausible and may be true, but cannot be verified.

3. Puffing a product, which is just a matter of opinion.

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**Nugget of the week**

Have you ever wondered why some cars are called lemons?

The story is that years ago car dealers used to be horse traders. They would have a windbroke horse (bad lungs) that looked good but could not do any real work. They would literally cut a lemon into quarters and shove the lemons up the nose of the horse. It would act real spry and full of energy due to the scent of the lemon and having something shoved up their nose. The unscrupulous dealers would go to another town, sell the horse to an unsuspecting customer and then skeedaddle out of town. When the lemons would rot and fall out, then the person would have to sell this useless horse for a much lower price to a local horse dealer. The horse dealers would have conventions and bring their “lemon” horses and everybody could buy back their “lemon” horses for what was paid for them. The dealers would then sell these horses over and over again. When the dealers started selling cars instead of horses, the term just migrated on over. Now you know!

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**Featured Car of the week**

1999 Ford Mustang $ 1600 for a car (national book)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPA Fuel economy</th>
<th>20 city/27 highway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crash ratings</td>
<td>3 to 4 stars</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some information on a site may be true, but that does not mean all of it is true. Be careful and cross check your information.

**Best Mustang anywhere at this price!**

Customize it for you with antlers and you can have a Moosetang!

No Moosetaking it, you will love it.

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Can you use this story as a credible reference?

In a story for a paper for a freshman English composition class, maybe.

A technical journal would require support from other venues.

Can you use these pieces of data as sources?

Although they may be accurate, it would be better to get the data from the sources themselves than to rely on a website with a vested interest in the price of the car.

This is an example of “puffing” a product, which is just a matter of opinion. This would be of little use as a source.