Evaluating Websites for the Elementary Student

WebQuest Description: Gain a better understanding of the Internet's size, where the information comes from, and how to tell what is reliable and what is not.

Grade Level: 3-5

Curriculum: Technology

Keywords: Internet, World Wide Web, website, web page, evaluation, bias, accuracy, credibility, reliable, good

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Introduction

Ever wonder exactly how much information is on the Internet, or better yet, who puts all that stuff on there? Well, the truth is the Internet is pretty much unending! It is by far the largest source of information in the world. There are billions of websites created by billions of authors. What's really scary is the fact that literally anyone can publish information on the Internet. Yes, even you! So, how can you tell if the information you find is reliable? You are about to embark on a journey designed to teach you exactly that! Along the way you will gain a better understanding of just how BIG the Internet really is, the types of people and organizations that might publish on the web, and how to take a critical look at the information you do find to determine if it is reliable or not!

Tasks

Ultimately, your task is to learn how to tell which information on the Internet is "Good" and which is "Bad". However, you can expect to learn much more than just that! When you finish this webquest you will be able to do all of the following:

- Complete a keyword search using Google. Give an accurate description as to the size or amount of information available on the Internet. Explain who publishes information on the internet. Explain what a URL is and what information can be obtained from it.
- Identify 10 or more key attributes of a reliable website. Use key attributes to accurately analyze a website for reliability. Locate accurate information for curriculum-related reports.

You will start by gaining a respect for the Internet. STEPS 1 & 2 will require that you complete a series of google searches which will demonstrate just how much information there is out there and that not everything you find will be accurate and reliable. STEP 3 is designed to help you gather information and design a tool, AKA a checklist, that will be helpful in evaluating the information you find while searching the web. As we all know, to become good at something we must "PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!"

So, STEP 4 will help you put your new knowledge and evaluation tool to work! You can expect your site evaluations to start out fairly easy and get tougher as you go. Remember that some sites can be very convincing and that this is something that is going to take a lot of practice to become good at. Try not to get frustrated. Good Luck!

Process

STEP 1: EXACTLY HOW MUCH INFORMATION DO I HAVE ACCESS TO? Activity 1: Complete a Google search using the term "cancer." Record the total number of results on the Google Worksheet attached in the Resources Section at the bottom of the page. Activity 2: Complete a second Google search using the term "zoo." Record the total number of results on the Google Worksheet. Activity 3: Complete a third Google search using a term of your choice. Be sure to choose a topic that interests you! (i.e., basketball, horses, stars, etc.) Record the total number of results as well as the URLs of the Top 5 results on the Google Worksheet. Keep the Google Worksheet for Activity 2 in STEP 4!

STEP 2: WHO CAN PUBLISH INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET? Activity 1: Visit the following sites. See if you can determine who published the information. Hint: Look for names, contact information, qualifications, etc. often found on pages titled "About Us", "Philosophy", "Background", "Biography," etc. Activity 2: Jackalope Conspiracy and The Federal Vampire and Zombie Agency. Activity 3: HOW CAN I SEPARATE THE GOOD FROM THE BAD? Activity 1: Use the following links to learn about the attributes of reliable websites. QUICK: The Quality Information Checklist. Activity 2: Evaluating Web Pages. Activity 3: Duke: Evaluating Web Pages. The Good. The Bad & The Ugly. Activity 2: Using what you have learned, create a checklist of 15 to 25 attributes/questions that can be used in evaluating the reliability of information on the web. Record your attributes/questions on the blank Evaluation Checklist located in the Resources Section at the bottom of the page. Remember, the more attributes you use, the more likely you will be to locate reliable information! STEP 4: PRACTICE!!! Activity 1: Below you will find 3 questions, each accompanied by a pair of websites. For each pair, one website is "Real" and one is a "Hoax." Complete an Evaluation Checklist (created in Activity 2 of STEP 3) for each website and use it to help you determine which is which. Notice that when you figure out which site is "Real" you will also have figured out the answer to the question. Be sure to complete the Question Section of the Evaluation Checklist for each website. Simply mark "Good", if the site is "Real", or "Bad", if the site is a "Hoax", and use 5-7 sentences to explain your findings. Be sure to hand in ALL 6 evaluation checklists when you are finished! Activity 1: Which animal is real? Activity 2: Which zoo would you visit? Activity 3: Which hospital would you trust?
ALL 5 checklists and your Google Worksheet when you are finished!

Evaluation

Student work will be evaluated using the following rubric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category and Score</th>
<th>Beginning 1</th>
<th>Progressing 2</th>
<th>Proficient 3</th>
<th>Advanced 4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Attributes/Questions on Evaluation Checklist</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>15 or More</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Attributes/Questions on Evaluation Checklist</td>
<td>Very few of the attributes/questions are appropriate and will most likely fail in producing an accurate analysis of a website.</td>
<td>Some of the attributes/questions are appropriate, but still too few to consistently produce an accurate analysis of a website.</td>
<td>Most of the attributes/questions are appropriate and will almost always produce an accurate analysis of a website. Attributes/Questions addressing a few minor areas are still missing.</td>
<td>All attributes/questions are appropriate, address nearly every area, and will consistently produce an accurate analysis of a website.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct Responses (*&quot;Good&quot; Websites Identified)</td>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Justifications</td>
<td>None Provided</td>
<td>Justifications are almost entirely opinion based. Very little reference is made to attributes/questions contained within the evaluation checklist.</td>
<td>Justifications are partly opinion based, but several references are made to attributes/questions contained within the evaluation checklist.</td>
<td>Justifications are entirely based upon the attributes/questions contained within the evaluation checklist.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

The Internet is truly "Information at your fingertips!" It provides pages upon pages of information about any and everything you could ever want to know and more is being added every minute of every day. Fortunately, there is currently very little regulation of the information being published and, sadly, not everything is completely accurate. As overwhelming as this all may seem, education is the key! You have just taken the first step by completing this webquest, but remember, becoming an expert takes time and practice, so keep up the good work! REFLECTION Below are some questions to think about as we bring this webquest to a close. 1. Why is it important to evaluate information found on the Internet? 2. How will the knowledge you've gained from this webquest help you in the future? 3. Were all of the websites easy to navigate? 4. Which of the evaluation websites did you find to be most helpful? EXTENSION When completing research projects for other classes, consider using the resources provided by this webquest as well as the evaluation checklist you compiled to enhance your search for reliable information. 1. Were there links within the websites provided that might produce even more valuable information? 2. Were there links within the websites provided that might produce even more valuable information? 3. Were there links within the websites provided that might produce even more valuable information? 4. Do you think we will need to begin regulating what is published on the Internet? 5. How might this be done?

Teacher Page

Title: Evaluating Websites for the Elementary Student Age: 3rd-5th Grade Time: 6-8 Class Sessions (30 minutes) Notes: This webquest is designed specifically for a unit in the technology classroom or computer lab. However, it could easily be adapted and used along with a research unit in language arts, history, etc. I generally coordinate with the 4th grade teacher and teach this unit when the students are beginning research for their Famous Americans report. We also extend our discussions about how this affects us in everyday life far beyond what is indicated in this webquest. The webquest is simply designed to get them started thinking about it. We've even had debates about issues like whether or not Internet publication should be regulated and how it could be done successfully! LOCAL STANDARDS Fillmore Central Technology Standards 4.2.3.1 Navigate through teacher selected Internet sites. 4.2.4.5.1 Understand and use Internet search engines to conduct curriculum-related searches. 6.2.3.1.1 Identify false or misleading information in oral and electronic presentations. Fillmore Central Media Standards 5.19 Determine validity of resources. 5.2.2.1 Maneuver within web-based resources. 5.2.3.1 Complete advanced online search strategies to access...
The Nebraska Department of Education has adopted and highly encourages use of the National Educational Technology Standards for Students. Nebraska Language Arts Standards

LA 3-5.4.1
a. Select and use multiple resources to answer guiding questions. LA 3-5.4.1 e. Identify bias and commercialism.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Students

1.d. Identify trends and forecast possibilities.
3.b. Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.
3.c. Evaluate and select information sources and digital tools based on the appropriateness to specific tasks.
4.c. Collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions.
5.a. Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.
5.c. Demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning.

AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner

1.1.1. Follow an inquiry based process in seeking knowledge in curricular subjects, and make the real-world connection for using this process in one's own life.
1.1.4. Find, evaluate, and select appropriate sources to answer questions.
1.2.4. Maintain a critical stance by questioning the validity and accuracy of all information.
2.2.4. Demonstrate personal productivity by completing products to express learning.
2.3.1. Connect understanding to the real world.
3.1.1. Conclude an inquiry based research process by sharing new understandings and reflecting on the learning.
3.3.4. Create products that apply to authentic, real-world contexts.
3.4.2. Assess the quality and effectiveness of the learning product.

ITEA Standards for Technological Literacy

3.3-5.C. Various relationships exist between technology and other fields of study.
4.3-5.B. When using technology, results can be good or bad.
4.3-5.C. The use of technology can have unintended consequences.
12.3-5.F. Use computers to access and organize information.
17.3-5.E. Information can be acquired and sent through a variety of technological sources, including print and electronic media.

Standards

Credits

Other