



Quality Considerations for Information Professionals

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Agenda

- What quality means in an information professional context
- Why it's important to us and to end users
- How to convince end users to practice “safe search”

Defining Quality

- From an information professional perspective:
 - Sources
 - Searchers
- From the quality perspective
 - Manufacturing it in
 - Fitness for purpose

Situational Quality

- A good piece of information for one purpose isn't useful for another
- Who's asking the question
 - Department
 - Discipline
 - Status
 - Knowledge

Quality Lapses

- Inappropriate for the client
- Ambiguous or deliberately fraudulent
 - Hoax sites
- Biased or non-objective
- Incomplete
- Out of date
- Missing data



Is This An Internet Problem?

- Not entirely
- Information can be incorrect in paper
- Reputable electronic sources repeat the errors

Why the Lapses?

- Deliberately misleading
 - Bias
 - Hoax
- Honest mistake
 - Research error
 - Misunderstanding the data
 - Coding error

Some Examples

- Science: Steven Leadon, Jan Henrik Schon, Victor Nimov
- News: Jayson Blair, Stephen Glass
- Business/Economics: Michael Boskin, Emulex
- Sports: “Krausening”

Corrections, Amplifications

- Each publisher handles differently
- Ramifications in traditional online
- Ramifications on Web sites
- Oops (Searcher, January 1996)
- Chiquita Banana (ONLINE, September/October 1998)



Misperceptions About Information

- If a tree doesn't fall on the Internet, does it really exist (Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 2002)
- The danger of Google history in a time of was (Orange County Weekly, March 14-20, 2003)

What If It's Us?

- Misunderstanding the question
 - Fitness for purpose
- Lacking skills or access
 - Searching badly
 - Being unable to afford appropriate source



Role of End-User Searchers

- Mediated searches on the decline
- Who is responsible for quality searches of end-users?
- Consequences of poor searches?

Scare Them to Death

- Examples of searches gone wrong
 - Johns Hopkins
 - Out of date financials
 - Error-ridden research
- Make it personal

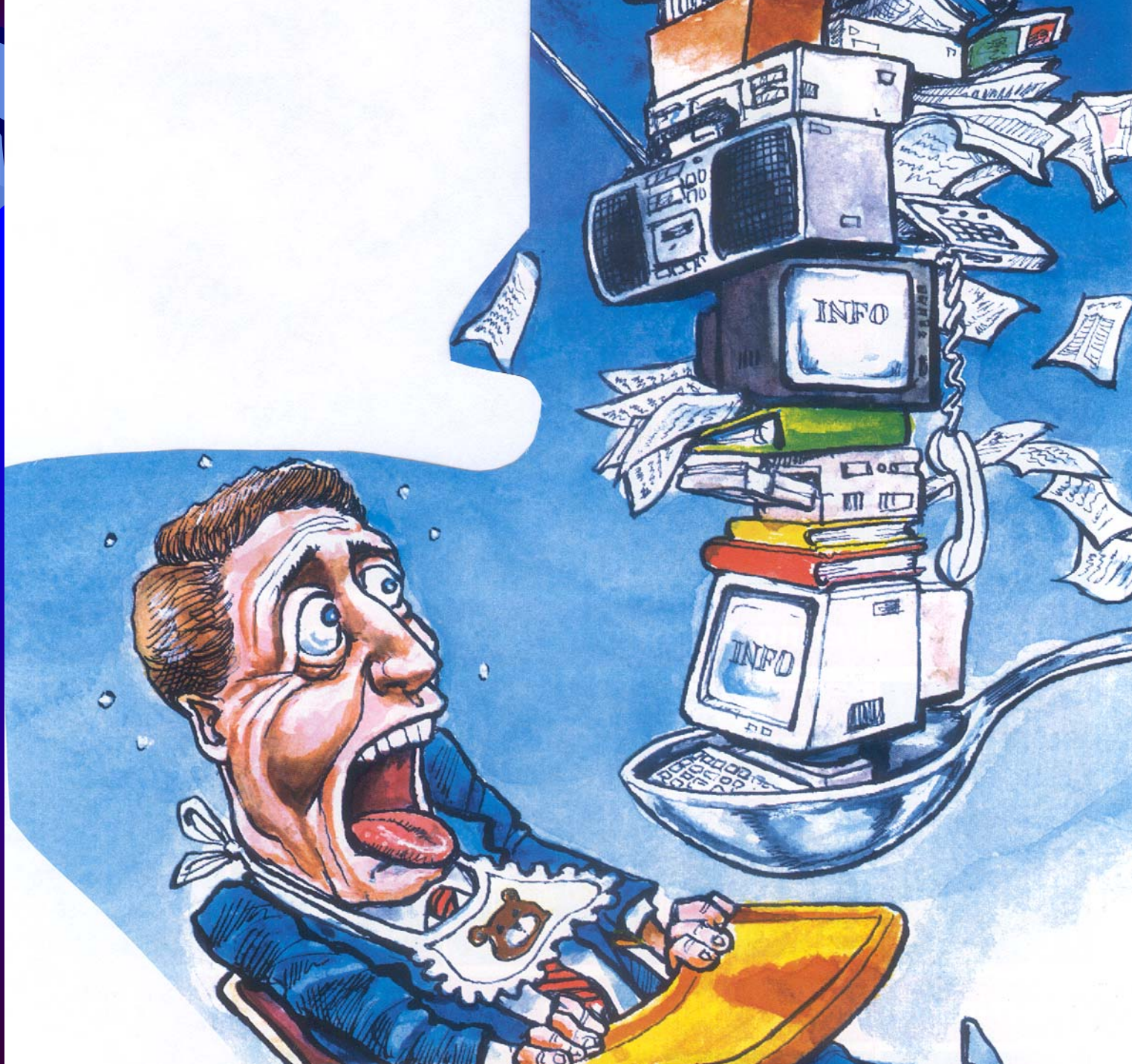


Kill Them With Kindness

- Helpful hints
 - Newsletter
 - Intranet
 - Technique of the day
 - Blog
- Communicate constantly
- Tell stories

Bibliographic Instruction

- This is really a quality issue
- Increasing number of formats searchable by Web search engines
- Distinguishing between public Internet and corporate intranet
- Understanding the difference between subscription services and free Web



User Confusion

- Information overload
- How to convince end-users of the power of the library
- Whether you scare them to death or kill them with kindness, use words appropriate to company, industry, workplace
- Don't undersell yourself as the expert

Does Contentment=Success?

- I wish I knew
- Procuring quality information sources with a decent interface that matches the need will increase the contentment level without sacrificing quality
- Road without an end?

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