

FOCUS

ON JERICHO TEACHERS AND THEIR ISSUES

January 2010

Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus

By Denise Ryder

If you had a medical, legal, or financial question, I'm sure you would consult a doctor, lawyer, or financial advisor. You would seek out an expert with the proper credentials and qualifications. Please use the same type of careful consideration when searching for information using the Web.

In the old days, when you needed information you went to the library. You asked the librarian, photocopied articles, and checked out books. For current events you cut out articles from the magazines and newspapers that were delivered to your house. The worst thing that could happen is that your folks got mad at you because you told them everything was due at the last minute!

Did it ever cross your mind that the facts you found might be in error? No, because information published in the sources you used were checked for accuracy before printing.

So the good thing for us is that last minute research isn't as inconvenient as it was for our parents. The bad thing is that there are people out there trying to tell our children that the Holocaust didn't happen, and that Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus is becoming endangered and is in need of our support!

Who publishes on the Internet?

Anyone and everyone. Who checks the Internet for accuracy? Nobody. And who exactly is responsible for misinformation? The same guy who checks for accuracy!

Providers of information, like providers of medical, legal, and financial advice, need qualifications and credentials. It's your job to LOOK and see that they do.

Here's the scenario...your kid comes home with an assignment for Black History Month. He has to find facts

Anyone can publish articles on *Wikipedia*, and anyone at anytime can edit them. So theoretically an expert *could* come along...

on Martin Luther King, Jr. No problem. You go to Google, type in Martin Luther King Jr., and get 13,400,000 results. You select a site called Martin Luther King Jr. located at [http://](http://www.martinlutherking.org)

www.martinlutherking.org. You go to this site and turn the keyboard over to your child who finds the answers to all his questions. You are reading over his final paper when you come across this quote, "Well friends, he is not a legitimate reverend, he is not a bona fide PhD, and his name isn't really "Martin Luther King, Jr. What's left? Just a sexual degenerate, an America-hating Communist, and a criminal betrayer of even the interests of his own people."

Whoa! You go back to the site and see that the sponsoring organization, *Stormfront*, is a white nationalist and supremacist, neo-Nazi online forum

Jericho Teachers Association

President - Maryann Risi

Middle School VP - Ted Lucher

High School VP - Kevin Brodsky

Elementary VP - Lois Burn

Treasurer - Ron Verderber

Secretary - Mike Pekor

Benefits Trust - Suzanne Jacobsen

VOTE/COPE - Chuck Koppeis

Focus / Web - Denise Ryder

JTA Office Secretary
Maria Migliaccio x3443

www.jerichoteachers.com



that has been described as the Internet's first major hate site.

Nice job.

Every time you go to a Web site, ask yourself this very important question: "Why do I believe this information to be true and accurate?" Is this a reliable source. You don't know? Stop and look closely. Think logically. You see one link for *The New York Times* online and one for *Wikipedia*? Which do you steer your child to? Lets think...*The New York Times* has been publishing "all the news that's fit to print" since 1851.

Journalists aspire to write for *The Times*. Seriously, IT'S THE NEW YORK TIMES!

Wikipedia, on the other hand, was launched in 2001. Anyone

Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus

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can publish articles on *Wikipedia* and anyone at any time can edit them. Get the picture?

My point is not to bash *Wikipedia*. I use *Wikipedia* from time to time. For example, if someone asked me to name Snow White's seven vertically challenged companions, I'd say Dopey, Doc, Grumpy, Sneezy, Happy, Bashful, umm (then I would go to *Wikipedia*, recognize the name Sleepy, and know that if it said "Sleazy" someone was messing around. Same thing with the planets. If I couldn't remember the planets in their proper order I *might* check *Wikipedia*. If, instead of saying

Uranus it said...something else...anyway...you understand.

I apologize. For some of you, exposing *Wikipedia* is like telling a child there's no Santa. You're in shock so I'll stop. There's always next month (ooh, I feel an Information Literacy series coming on)!

I'll end with a lesser known quote. "The Internet is like a power tool, if you don't know how to use it properly you are likely to get hurt, and lucky if you don't."

Actually, I just made that up. Good, right?

What's in a (domain) name?

Here are some webby words you should know:

IP Address - an IP address is a series of numbers that identifies a computer on the Internet. Think of an IP address like a Social Security number. Your Social Security number is unique and identifies you to the powers that be. Same thing with an IP address. But not easy to remember.

Domain Name - a name that identifies an IP address. Because `http://198.105.232.4` would be impossible to remember, it is given a name like `http://www.pictureframes.com`.

Domain Name Suffix - all Web addresses end in "dot" something (.com, .org, .edu, etc.). You can get some very helpful information as to the nature of the sponsor of a Web site by understanding what these suffixes stand for. Here are some popular ones:

.com Indicates a commercial site. Not all commercial sites will try to sell you something, but they warrant a different kind of scrutiny than those at a .gov, which indicates a United States government site.

.gov and **.mil** These suffixes are limited to United States government and military use respectively.

.net This suffix indicates a network.

.edu This suffix is limited to colleges and universities. The quality and nature of .edu sites range from faculty who may know what they are talking about and be experts, to poetry by students rejected by their creative writing departments. If you see a tilde (~) as part of the address, it usually indicates that you have come across a personal page likely created by someone who was given space on the school's Web server. Remember that it is as easy for a student who received an "A" to publish his or her paper as it is for a student who received an "F," Harvard notwithstanding.

.k12 This suffix is limited to elementary and secondary schools, so these pages can be by students, teachers, or the school itself.

.org Originally intended for non-profit organizations or organizations of a non-commercial character. Frankly lots of schools that should be .k12 are using .org (like `jerichoschools.org`). CAREFULLY check out organizations to make sure they are who they say they are. When in doubt, err to the side of caution.

URL - stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is the formal name for Web address.

Some domain suffixes are limited with regard to who can purchase them (.gov, .mil, .edu, and .k12, for example). The suffixes .com and .org can be purchased by anybody. Not-for-profits *really* want to be .orgs because otherwise, at first glance, they appear to be commercial sites. Other groups, like *Stormfront*, choose .org in order to lead you believe they are a non-profit organization or foundation with no agenda or ulterior motive, and they bought the domain name `martinlutherking` to spread their hatred.

When looking at a Web page...

When looking at a Web page, ask yourself these questions.

1. Can you tell who wrote the material and are the author's qualifications stated?
2. Are there dates on the page to indicate when it was written? When it was last revised?
3. Are there any other indications that the material is kept current or frequently updated?
4. Is there an institution/organization associated with this material giving it credibility?
5. Is there a way of verifying the legitimacy of this institution/organization such as a phone number or an address? (an e-mail address is really not enough).
6. Does the information presented agree with other information you have found on the topic? (If the information presented cannot be verified in other, reliable sources, it could be someone's opinion and not based on fact).
7. Are the sources for factual information listed so they can be verified elsewhere if necessary (is there a bibliography)?
8. Is the information objective? Was the information provided as a public service or are they trying to sell you something? Is it free of advertising? If there is advertising, is it clearly differentiated from the information?
9. Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and other errors? Errors indicate a lack of quality control, and can actually produce inaccuracies in information.
10. Is the page's general appearance professional? (Blinking text, lots of animated graphics, overpowering background images make a page look amateurish which could be a reflection of the author and his or her content knowledge).

Reading Search Results

Title of Page → [The Holocaust](#)

Sentence or text fragment from the site → May 4, 2009 ... [The Holocaust](#) was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime ...

Web address → www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/index.php?ModuleId=10005143 - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

The web address is the first place to look for clues. The title can be deceiving, and the text fragment is only slightly useful. The suffix is .org so it is some kind of non-profit or non-commercial site. You may not recognize the domain name (the part between the “www” and the “.org” because it is the acronym, but this is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Reliable source? I’d say!



Congratulations to Cathy Rosh on the birth of her daughter, Margot Priscilla

Congratulations to Lois Wittman on the birth of her grandson, Isaiah

Professional Practices Committee

The JTA Professional Practices Committee met to discuss the evaluation process at each building level. The committee is looking to promote consistency in the observation and evaluation procedure of teachers through out the district. The committee consists of Jacqueline O'Neill, Lauren DeMarinis, Araceli Vidal, Mike Hartnett, Angie Cancemi, and Ron Verderber.

Save the date! JTA End of Year Celebration will be held June 10!

