Team Knowledge Work
Virginia Commonwealth University
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Business Communication Students
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia 23284

Dear Colleagues:

Subject: Proposal for Dr. Randolph Barker, Virginia Commonwealth University

Team Knowledge Work is pleased to submit the following proposal to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and coordination of research tasks for the faculty, staff, and student body of Virginia Commonwealth University. Our team has been locating information sources, evaluating their credibility, and publishing the results of our research online since 1995 and has participated in over 50 of these projects - including accounting, organizational behavior, marketing, art history, to information systems topics.

Background

Today's knowledge workers are experiencing information overload. Never before has so much information been available, and demands for processing this information have increased exponentially. Recent articles have contended that little research has been conducted in the area of Internet information credibility and verification.

A researchers ability to locate information electronically has branched into several distinct methods for browsing and searching through the mass of sources. Unfortunately, this has also increased the researchers skepticism of these sources, so techniques for their evaluation have been developed. These simple and easy-to-use methods have saved individuals and corporations from falling into the subtle trap of mishandled information.

The rapid growth in teams during the 21st century proves how increasingly valuable peer review has become. Technological tools exist to enable quick and easy collaborative environments in virtual space. With the internet becoming increasingly more adaptable into our professional, personal, and everyday lifestyle people have to learn a completely new way to stay ahead and even current on trends, research, and programs.

Proposed Approach and Work Plan

Team Knowledge Work will adopt a virtual collaborative environment to develop a presentation and

proposal on understanding the diverse tools to locate information on the web, how to evaluate their credibility, and how best to coordinate these activities for our colleagues where face to face meeting is not an alternative. Specifically, we will coordinate tasks via email, publish our research findings on a wiki, and participate in peer review for the publication of our results. We will create a proposal and presentation based on these results by collaboratively editing the content submitted to the wiki.

Team Knowledge Work will provide the qualified students to perform the necessary research to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and coordination of research tasks. Ms. Sarah Haman will provide an overview for the abundance of electronic sources - search engines, web directories, and databases. Project management responsibility will be assigned to Mr. Sky Huvard. Sky will also be coordinating the wiki adoption. Ms. Rebecca Search will determine guidelines for the evaluation of electronic sources.

Qualifications

Team Knowledge Work has been locating electronic sources for research tasks online for over 10 years. Our team has examined diverse sources for topics such as accounting, marketing, information systems, and art history on the web. These heterogeneous sources speak to our ability to search the web for wide-ranging topics. The expert scrutiny required to validate these diverse information sources will uniquely qualify us to document the foundation for the examination of credibility. We will use a collaborative writing environment, operating as a virtual team to coordinate our tasks and peer-review our results. Expertise in this virtual space will shed light on the concepts necessary to adopt an effective online knowledge base.

Research for Project

A Map for the Web

Your knowledge of the Internet is an important factor in utilizing the information that is offered. Children and students are among the top groups who use the Internet for research. Today, it is nearly mandatory that students use the Internet for research. 30% of teachers give homework requiring research from the Internet. In a classroom, 66% of teachers use the Internet to lecture.

The Internet is a system of networks, connecting computers to computers. Each runs software to provide information to access and view information. The Internet is the transport medium for the information stored in files or documents on different computers. The web incorporates all of the Internet services above and much more. You can access documents, view images, animation, and video, listen to sound files, speak and hear voice, and view programs that run on nearly any software in the world.

- Search engines are built by computer robot programs and are not organized into subject categories. The search engines contain full-text results and often recover a lot of information that is always unevaluated. Examples of search engines are Google or Yahoo.
- Subject directories such as About.com or AcademicInfo.com are collected by people and are structured into topic categories, but never have full text or the web pages they link to. Subject directories are small, specialized, and have a vast range in size - the advantage is frequently and carefully evaluated and annotated sources.
- Databases have access to newspapers, magazines, and journals. Databases usually require a subscription but some are free by use in libraries and other institutions such as those by LexisNexis and ProQuest.

Avoiding Information Fraud

While conducting this research, it is very important to find credible information. Scholarly journals such as the Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, Management Communication Quarterly, and Black Enterprise contain valuable insight for ensuring accurate information. A check-off list and other helpful tips for obtaining credible internet sources has been compiled from these sources.

1. When verifying the validity of an internet site, consider the author's goals - note the URL suffix to avoid commercial relationships with those who may have a vested interest.
2. Check the site qualifications and credentials to assess its credibility, look for a "stamp of approval" or seek out other sources to validate the information.
3. Look for current data and make sure the information is complete and comprehensive.

While using this three step list, there are a few important tips and hints to keep in mind that will help you in the process. Begin by visiting familiar sites before moving on to unfamiliar sites. Track grammatical, spelling and typo errors, which are signals of carelessness. Beware of information you receive from message boards and chat rooms because they may not be monitored.

Collaboration on the Web

Electronic mediums such as the web open incredible possibilities to collaborate on the publication of research results. By adopting virtual spaces to work online in a team, the negative impact of conflicting schedules and limited time constraints can be negated through time-shifted communication and continual up to date version availability.

When working in a team to develop a project or presentation, a virtual collaborative environment such as a wiki should be used to document your tasks, responsibilities and research results. It is

possible to invite other members of your team to participate in a challenging problem.

By using web based collaboration tools instead of email, you can structure your research communications by content rather than time. A wiki can make it easy to monitor the recent changes to any content by showing the difference from previous versions.

Summary and Conclusions

The Internet is a compilation of life. It is the largest source of information that we as a society could ever hope to have access to. It surpasses books, media, communication, and all other forms of obtaining information. Because information can be so readily produced and received, the process can easily contain flaws. These flaws may be minor fluctuations in opinion, or be a major peril to your search of precise information. By adopting a wiki, virtual teams can coordinate information processing tasks and have an organic growth structure for managing contributions. By tracking recent changes, your team members can participate in peer review quickly and easily.

Researchers must recognize the diversity of information sources the web has to offer. These sources of information on the web must have their credibility validated. The web also allows research teams to coordinate their tasks without schedule problems. Because Team Knowledge Work successfully accomplished its goals for creating a presentation and proposal in a virtual space, we recommend that for your next research task, you:

1.   Experiment with different web search tools
2.   Adopt the three step evaluation process for information on the web
3.   Use an online collaboration application for coordinating your research tasks

Sincerely,

Sarah Haman, Sky Huvard, Rebecca Search
Team Knowledge Work

Accepted for Virginia Commonwealth University.

By _____ Date _____

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