

Evaluate the Evidence: An Innovative Method for Web Page Evaluation

*Information presented here concludes a pilot study of SPAT. Formal evaluation of the tool is measuring the acceptance of SPAT by certified diabetes educators.

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Introduction

This research study measures the acceptance of an assessment tool developed by this researcher. Using the tool named SPAT (Site, Publisher, Audience, Timeliness), evaluates web page content quality and reliability.

To this date there has been no publication of a validated web page content assessment tool. The un-validated criterion that has been published is lengthy, arduous, and too time consuming for general use by health care professionals and laypersons. Validation of a reliable easy to use tool is needed.

It is postulated that SPAT fits within the time frame consumers have for browsing and reading web pages, therefore making it a tool that will be applied. If the user applies the acronym tool they will inclusively assess the quality of the web page content enabling them to make an educated decision on its validity for their purposes.

Methodology

Tool Development: To develop a tool that would be used to assess web page content. An analysis of methods used to review paper resources was done and then compared with published methods to review web sites or web pages.

The second step in development was an informal questioning of professional colleagues – with three or more years of academic librarianship experience. From these experts the researcher defined the characteristics of a web page content assessment tool that professional librarians and others would routinely use.

Lastly, characteristics of the students who would use the tool completed the profile for what an ideal web page assessment tool.

Based on the above assessments, the following features became the foundation of the tool :

- * Memorable
- * Easy to use
- * Require no additional time when browsing a web page for fun or for information
- * An acronym

Tallying the features used in other assessment tools enabled the researcher to place features in categories and then evaluate the data for themes in evaluation. The themes represented the fields for publisher, site, audience and timeliness. The thematic words were shuffled in an attempt to create a mechanism for evaluating web page content. The end result was the acronym SPAT (Site, Publisher, Audience, and Timeliness).

The methodology used coincides with the purpose of the tool: easy to use, easy to remember, and requiring no more time than normally allotted when browsing a web page. SPAT was created for use by professionals and requires little time and little effort.

Tool Evaluation 1: Initial testing of SPAT occurred with nursing students. A narrative explanation was given to demonstrate the importance of evaluating web page content and one example of how to use SPAT against a web page. Students were then given an in-class assignment to use SPAT against three pre-selected web pages. The assignment was reviewed in class and then two more web pages for SPAT evaluation were assigned for graded homework. The in-class assignment was successful and the homework showed positive outcomes for SPAT adoption and utilization.

- Tool Evaluation 2:**
- Complete demographic questionnaire
 - Evaluate 'Set One' web pages
 - Complete evaluation questionnaire
 - Introduction of SPAT with SPAT chart
 - Evaluate 'Set Two' web pages
 - Complete evaluation questionnaire
 - Two weeks later complete follow-up questionnaire

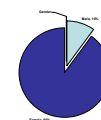
Case Study: Two sets of web pages were used for a pre and post analysis with SPAT. Each set contained two web sites discussing diabetes.

Only four web pages were reviewed to meet the typical web page attention span. A study of search logs from the search engine AlltheWeb.com, concluded that people, on average, view eight web documents per web search and 66% of the Web users view less than five web pages per search (Jansen & Spink, 2003). To analyze four web pages with SPAT fits the typical user information retrieval behavior from the Web as found by Jansen and Spink.

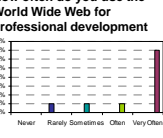
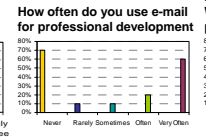
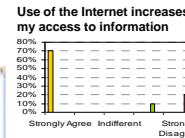
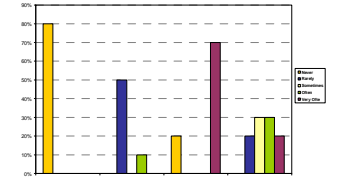
The web sites for the study were retrieved from blogs, based on the belief that people with diabetes make references in blogs to the web pages that they feel have some valuable information. The researcher is not filtering the information on the web pages for accuracy but simply presenting freely accessible web pages for subjects to analyze.

A link check to verify that the web pages are not totally obscure, but can be found by a search engine and recognized by others, was performed with Yahoo.com and Google.com.

Pilot Study Results n=10



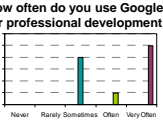
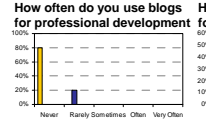
Where do you access to the Internet



Set One



Set Two



Research Questions

1. At what level do Pittsburgh metropolitan area Certified Diabetic Educators (CDEs) use information from the Web in their professional practice?
2. What kind of assessment do Pittsburgh metropolitan area CDEs perform on web based diabetes information before recommending the information to patients?
3. If CDEs perform an assessment of web based diabetes information before recommending the information to patients, what do they do?
4. At what level does the use of the SPAT assessment tool for web-based information make a difference in the information CDEs provide to patients?

S
SITE

P
PUBLISHER

A
AUDIENCE

T
TIMELINESS

SPAT

Discussion

The questionnaires in the pilot study used to evaluate SPAT and the demographic questionnaire were successful in gathering the necessary data. The variance of age and mixed professions in the sample population showed evidence of disparity in the knowledge of web page components that should be present when selecting a web page for reliable information.

Limitations:

- Only professionals in the field of diabetes will be measured
- The study sample population will only concern clinical professionals
- No control can be established to prevent the Hawthorne Effect from occurring