

Learn the Real Facts about Websites

There's a staggering amount of information available on the Internet... and a lot of it is inaccurate. Online search expert Tara Calishain calls them "Internet facts" and says, "They're not necessarily true."

"They're distributed," she explains in her book *Web Search Garage* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall PTR, 2005), 111, "via both the Web and e-mail. There are a couple of resources that are invaluable for checking out these sites, but in addition to these resources there are three e-mail characteristics that should raise a red flag for you:

1. You're asked to forward the e-mail to everyone you know.
2. The e-mail describes a problem — like a particularly horrible virus — that if it were legitimate would be on every cable channel as an emergency news flash, including the Golf Channel.
3. The e-mail promises you some kind of reward for forwarding/replicating the mail."

Here are three of the resources Calishain recommends for checking out Internet sites and facts:

Snopes — <http://www.snopes.com> - "Snopes is the first site I go to when I want to check out something that someone has sent me. It's never let me down."

Vmyths — <http://www.vmyths.com> - Use this one, she says, to learn the truth behind virus warnings.

Evaluating information found on the Internet —

<http://www.library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/evaluating/index.html> — This site from The Sheridan Libraries at Johns Hopkins University "discusses the criteria by which scholars in most fields evaluate print information, and shows how the same criteria can be used to assess information found on the Internet."