



Reaching Out With the Web: Evaluation of Food Safety Website Quality



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Presentation Overview

- Purpose of research
- Background -- Web Quality
- WQET – an instrument for rating Web sites
 - What makes an effective website -- Quality Factors
 - Good information from effective websites
- Blue Ribbon sites
- Look ahead: User study

Suddenly,
Everyone's concerned about food safety...



“For more information, go to the Web.”

- What’s wrong with this statement?

The Web is becoming the information resource of choice:

Google™



Everyday Role of the Web

- 60 million adults in America use a search engine on any given day (Rainie & Shermak)
- 49% of those users are looking for health information for another person, and 19% are looking for such information for themselves (Horrigan & Rainie, 2006)

Why are we doing this research?

- Answer important questions
 - What is the **quantity** and **quality** of **Web objects** devoted to food biosecurity?
 - How do consumers use websites to learn about food contamination?
- Add to our knowledge about the Web and how people search it.
- Help designers reach intended audiences.

What history has taught us...

- In the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, our focus is:
 - Information retrieval
 - User studies
 - Data and information quality research
 - The ubiquitous nature of the Web.

How are we doing this research?

- Examining information about food recalls on the Web.
- Finding “deep” food safety information sites.
- Rating websites for quality.
- Conducting user studies
 - People sit at computers and search for information about food safety and biosecurity.
 - Results are analyzed.
 - Follow-up questionnaire asks about what they learned.

Recalls: Salad

- Searched “packaged salad recall” in November, 2005
 - Yahoo had 73,500 total hits, of the first 10 hits,
 - 4 referenced the **September 23, 2005** Dole event
 - 6 referenced **older events** – some with no dates
 - Google had 67,400 total hits, of the first 10 hits,
 - **All** about the **September 23, 2005** event
 - Many were from local news outlets

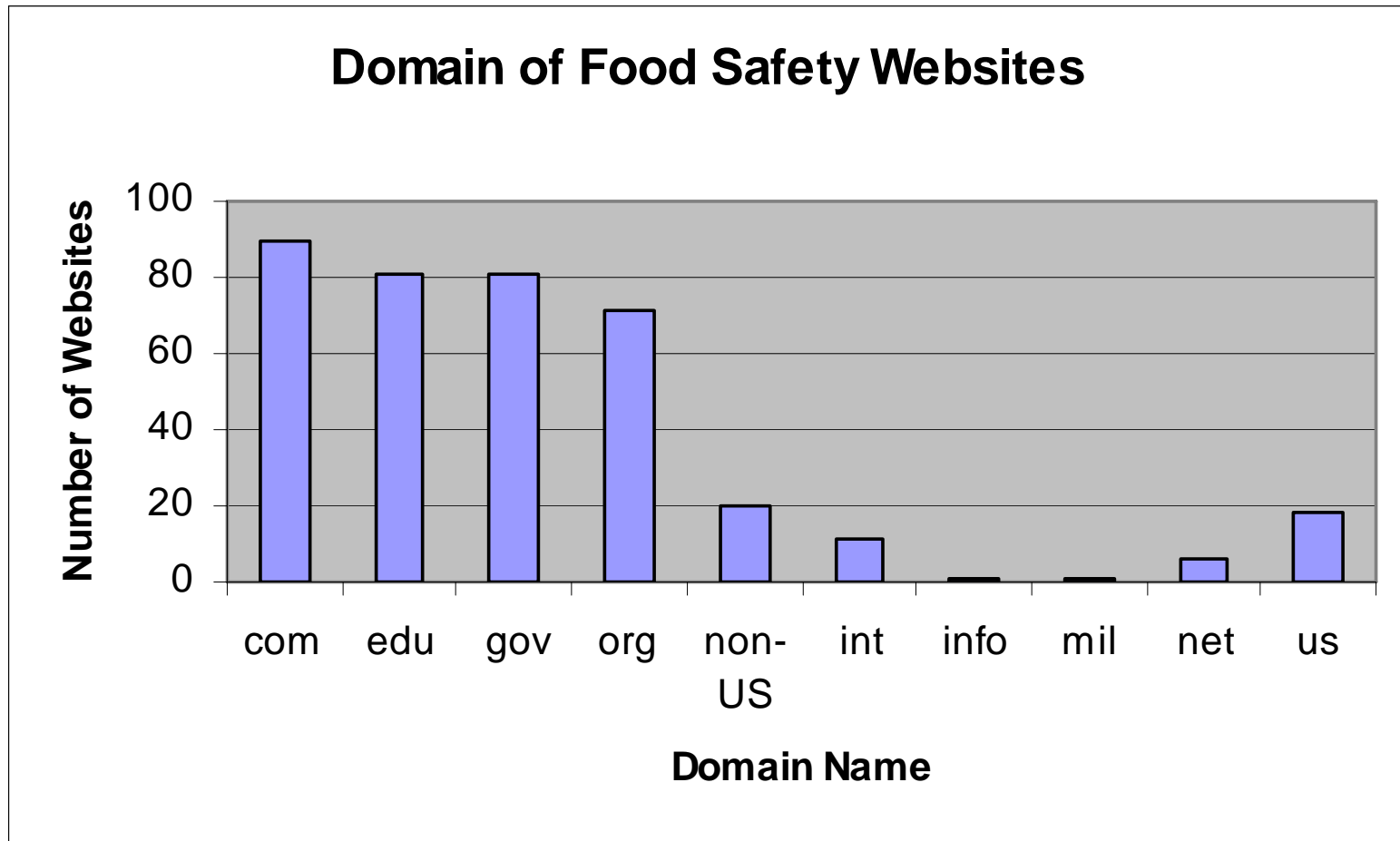
Recalls: Meat

- Searched “meat recall” to track an October 2005 event at Trader Joe’s grocery stores.
 - Yahoo had over 4 million total hits,
 - Of the first 10 hits, **none were relevant** to the **October 2005** event, some referred to events dating as far back as **1998**.
 - Google had 3.8 million total hits,
 - Of the first 10 hits, only one detailed the **October, 2005** event

Searching for Websites

- 10 search terms were used, including: food safety, food biosecurity, agroterrorism, bioterrorism, etc.
- Two different search engines were used: Google and Yahoo.
- Researches examined top 20 sites on each search engine for each term.
- Of the **379 Web resources** that were relevant, we found that only 50 that are “deep” enough to be useful to information seekers.

Domains of entire Sample



A good instrument is hard to find.

- Lists of quality characteristics vary but there's consensus about many of them.
- **The Website Quality Evaluation Tool (WQET)**
 - Designed for “deep” Websites.
 - 41 Questions in 2 main categories with 3 subcategories

WQET – Categories of Questions

- Presentation of Information
 - Functionality
 - Graphics
 - Style
- Content
 - Content
 - Coverage
 - Authority

WQET – Paper Version

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Web Site Quality Evaluation Tool for Food Safety Project (06-22-06)

This tool is for Web developers, Web teams, or information professionals who are interested in rating Web sites for trustworthiness and quality. Evaluate the site according to each quality criterion. Rate each category, using a scale of 1-7 (see below).

+	
ID#	
Website URL	
Website Title	
Sponsor	

Rating Scale:

1-2	3-4	5-6	7	NA
Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Not able to assess

Please rate the following characteristics of the website on a scale from 1-7 using the above as a guide. **Excellent = 7** and **NA=Not able to assess**. Evaluate the site by circling the appropriate score.

A. PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION

a. Functionality

1. Site loading time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA Score _____

2. Navigation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA Score _____

3. Is there a pointer to content (site map, index, directory, search function)?

___ yes [(+1)] ___no (-1) ___not sure (0) Score _____

4. If answer to question 4 is "yes," please rate the quality of this factor.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA Score _____

5. Quality of the information organization structure.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA Score _____

6. Links are live and reliable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA Score _____

Total score this section _____

