

# Is Seeing Believing?

## Visual Literacy and Web Evaluation

### From Text to Images: A World of Visuality

Since information became widely available on the Web, librarians have recognized the need to teach students critical evaluation skills. As we move from “a world of literacy to a world of visuality” (Natharius 2004) the need to evaluate images as well as text becomes imperative. Because images, even more than text, can be used to manipulate the viewer, we must prepare students to become “constructive critics of visual information” (Metros & Woolsey 2006).

Metros, S.E. & Woolsey, K. (2006, May/June). Visual literacy: An institutional imperative. *EDUCASE Review*, 80-81.

Natharius, D. (2004). The more we know, the more we see: The role of visuality in media literacy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48(2), 238-247.

### ACRL Standards and Visual Literacy

The ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education state that as part of the ability to critically evaluate information and its sources, the information literate student “recognizes prejudice, deception, or manipulation.” Because images are often an integral part of Web resources, the ability to decode images plays a crucial role in Web evaluation.

ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards, Standard Three.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>

### Web of Deception

Images proliferate on the Web, and many of them are designed to manipulate, persuade, and deceive viewers. In the following classroom exercise, students examine the seemingly realistic text and images on the website *Pop! The First Human Male Pregnancy*, created by the artist Virgil Wong. After discussing the validity of the site and possible reasons for its creation, students can find out more about the site and its creator on Hoaxbusters, a website dedicated to detecting false or questionable information on the Internet.

Following the Pregnant Man activity are more links to sites that use both real and fake images to enhance their credibility. Students can check one of the hoax-busting sites to see if their impressions about these sites are correct.

## The Pregnant Man?

Look at this image closely. What do you see?

Is the Time Magazine cover real? How could you find out?

The picture is from the website *Pop! The First Human Male Pregnancy* ([www.malepregnancy.com](http://www.malepregnancy.com))

Who is the author or sponsor of this website?

Why did the author/sponsor create this page?

Is the information true? How do you know?



**Check your answers!** Hoaxbusters <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org> is a website that identifies false or questionable information on the Internet. Check Hoaxbusters and see if you can find out more about the male pregnancy site and its creator.

Hint: Look under "Jokes."

Other Internet hoaxbusting websites:

[www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)

[www.hoax-slayer.com](http://www.hoax-slayer.com)

[www.museumofhoaxes.com](http://www.museumofhoaxes.com)

Find out more about these Web stories and pictures:

Feline Reactions to Bearded Men

<http://www.sree.net/stories/feline.html>



Havidol

<http://havidol.com>



John Kerry and Jane Fonda  
<http://www.vietnamwar.com/janefonda.htm>

## Fonda Speaks To Vietnam Veterans At Anti-War Rally



Actress And Anti-War Activist Jane Fonda Speaks to a crowd of Vietnam Veterans as Activist and former Vietnam Vet John Kerry (LEFT) listens and prepares to speak next concerning the war in Vietnam (AP Photo)

Seeing is not always believing!

***The next time you wonder if  
something you see on the Web is  
real, find out!***

Hints:

Feline Reactions to Bearded Men: [Museum of Hoaxes](#)

Havidol: [Museum of Hoaxes](#)

John Kerry and Jane Fonda: [Snopes](#)

**Resources:**

**Websites:**

[ICYouSee: T is for Thinking A Guide to Critical Thinking About What You See on the Web](#) Ithaca College Library

[The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, or Why It's a Good Idea to Evaluate Web Sources](#) New Mexico State University Library

[Hoax? Scholarly research? Personal opinion? You decide!](#) University of California Los Angeles College Library

**Articles:**

Fiete, R.D. (2005, January). Photo fakery. *oemagazine*. <http://oemagazine.com>.

Goldsborough, R. (2006). What to do about Internet hoaxes. *Information Today*, 23(8), 41-2.

Notess, G. R. (2006). Re-Evaluating Web Evaluation. *Online*, 30(1), 45-7.



Real or fake? Find out on [Snopes!](#)

Dawn Amsberry  
Pennsylvania State University  
dua4@psu.edu