

OPINION

Living

MAPLE

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My view



Tina
Rogers

Too much information?

The Internet is a wonderful creation. In some ways. However, a ponderous question hangs over it.

Access to information is so fast, easy and abundant we have had to adapt to a new age almost overnight. There is so much information available from so many sources with such a variation in credentials, how does anyone sort the wheat from the chaff.

Regardless of the topic of interest, there are usually tens of thousands of hits, fragments of information that directly or vaguely relate to any query, from a multitude of sources. It's a sure bet that much of the information conflicts with input from other sources.

Human nature tends to drive belief if something is written then it must be true. Fifty two million references (in under a second) to a query on "healthy exercise" cannot be identical. Can they? If we like to believe what we read, and there are at least 52 million opinions to consider from sources with good credentials, how is this handled?

Are decisions reached only after pondering 52 million references. Hardly. Perhaps 20 references on the first two pages of hits should be prioritized. Maybe. Or read the first one, and hope it's right. It has its possibilities.

Imagine scores of people in Maple sitting at a computer monitor searching tirelessly for information, their fingers a blur as they click and tap. Remember, school children have to search the Internet for many research projects. Feel sorry for them, they are as confused as anyone.

I have fair computer skills, and I'm reasonably intelligent. But it's a mystery to me how to discern what is absolutely credible.

Regardless of ability with a computer and skill in creating just the right keyword phrase for the search engine, it's not clear how to validate information any more. It takes so long to check credentials, go through multiple references, and get to the right source. Can anyone be blamed for taking the easy way out and going with the first hit on the first page?

If those first page references get there only because of the cleverness of the Webmaster or the size of the marketing budget paying for prominence on a search engine, what hope does that give to producers of bona fide and valuable information that lack guerrilla web skills or a marketing budget?

It seems that if a reference appears on anything other than the first page, it's toast.

It's debatable whether the Internet has made research easier or harder, and whether using the Internet as a research tool really saves time.

Comments? Email Tina at mapleliving@rogers.com

Around Around Town



COURTESY CITY YOUTH PLAYERS

The City Youth Players present a Cabaret revue, an annual fundraising event at the City Playhouse, Sunday April 22 at 7:30 p.m. The Cabaret features talented cast members in individual and group numbers. As well as spectacular entertainment, there's a silent auction. Tickets are available at the theatre box office 905-882-SHOW (7469).

YOUR VIEW

Don't be shy

This is no time for modesty. Your community wants to know what's going on, and you can help. Please drop me a line about the goings-on, the special people and upcoming events in your area. Demonstrate Maple pride.

Who do you know in Maple who is doing something out of the ordinary? Is there an event coming up that you are sure others would hate to miss, or a good cause that deserves community support?

What makes Maple great is the combination of fascinating people, the great amenities, the respect we have for all kinds of arts – music, performances, the fine arts. And there are plenty of happenings. I do as much research as I can, but I hope I can rely on you to let me know what you know.

By the way, if you have any comments about what we've covered in this issue or in the past, they are also most welcome. Let me know. For example, what do you think about the Heritage Study?

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Living ON OUR COVER



PHOTO METRO CREATIVE GRAPHICS

Children of all ages prepare for the traditional games, ceremonies and celebrations of Easter — the end of Lent and a marker for the beginning of spring.

Iconoclast



Chris
Caldwell

Interconnectedness

We're bombarded by news and information from all over the world. News spreads fast — in minutes — from the farthest reaches of the globe. We could pretend there is a grand disconnect, that somehow the miles between us and the people in the news story are so great we cannot be affected.

We run our lives as if we are in a bubble. We can choose to ignore we are intricately tied to all these events, pretend there is no butterfly effect, and say we have no connection to far-flung events on this great planet. We forgive ourselves for assuming one person can't make a difference.

Is your thinking, and that of the great majority, correct?

We know about the huge strides made in science and technology in recent decades. It seems we can hardly keep pace with the speed of progress and evolution of technologies, including our knowledge of the Earth and of ourselves.

Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese researcher and President Emeritus of the International Water for Life Foundation, experimented with water. Music, visual images, photographs and words written on paper were used to stimulate the water. Photographed at high speed and high magnifications, the results were astonishing. Dr. Emoto discovered ice crystals formed in frozen water revealed different patterns depending on the thoughts or ideas directed towards them. Projected thoughts of love served to show beautifully formed crystalline structures in the photographs, while negative thoughts of hate formed incomplete broken patterns (view them at www.hado.net). Apparently the hydrogen bonds are so sensitive they react to minute changes in energy vibrations. Is this evidence that our thoughts do affect everything around us?

Here is another case. In 1993, a study published in the Social Indicators Research Journal predicted in advance that a specific group meditation performed in Washington D.C. would reduce violent crime there by over 20 per cent. It turned out to be more like 23 per cent, and the odds were one in half a billion that crime would drop by such a significant amount. There were no clear alternatives to explain the improvement. The researcher attributed the reduction in violent crime during the study period to the effects of the field of consciousness, a term from quantum field theories.

Examples like these demonstrate how our thoughts, attitudes and emotions deeply affect our environment. If thoughts can change the crystalline patterns of water, or reduce the crime rate in Washington, imagine how they can affect goings-on in other parts of the world.

Perhaps, with the right thoughts and energy, you can make the world a better place from your armchair.

Chris quit corporate life to follow his passion for sustainable communities and urban planning, and is pursuing a masters degree in environmental studies at York University.