



Chartered Institute of  
Library and Information  
Professionals

## Measuring Website Quality

### **A response to the Central Office of Information's Consultation Document from the President of the Chartered Institute of Library & information Professionals (CILIP)**

1. I respond to this consultation on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). CILIP is the professional body for library and information practitioners in the UK and, amongst its 21,000 members, many work in Government Departments, NDPBs and other executive agencies of government. At the moment CILIP is involved in the Information Matters programme, overseen by the Knowledge Council, promoting effective knowledge and information management within government. It is in that context that I respond to the COI consultation on measuring website quality as the effective management of websites is an important component of knowledge and information management. Government guidance also acts as a model for practice in the rest of the public sector as well (and perhaps beyond) and therefore the series of guidance on assessing the quality and value of government websites is most welcome as a way of promulgating best practice.
2. In the short time available it has not been possible to formulate a full CILIP response on assessing the quality of government websites. Nevertheless I think it important to raise the specific issue of the treatment of departmental publications on websites.
3. The section on editorial quality rightly emphasises the need for up-to-date material to appear on websites, and by implication for new material to be readily findable on publication by signposting from the home page and / or through the search facility on the site. Less obvious is the substantial and important use made of government websites as an active archive of departmental publishing, in the form both of website content and of publications that have also appeared in other formats (primarily in print). This use supports research, information and knowledge management, and library services across the academic, corporate and public sectors, and helps Departments to fulfil their obligations under Freedom of Information legislation. (Information already made available by means such as by publication on Departmental

websites is exempt from FOI requests under section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or section 25 of the Freedom of Information Act (Scotland) 2002).

4. CILIP believes it important that assessments of a website's editorial quality should include measures of the completeness and ease of finding of departmental publications in digital formats. Departments now typically have 10-15 years of electronic publishing that should be preserved for the long term, in the same way that official publications in printed form continue to be through the British Library, Departmental libraries and other collections. Pan-Government initiatives are addressing the issue of archiving official websites, but less attention appears to be being paid to maintaining and making publicly available a high quality archive of departmental publications. It is important too that such an archive or archives have sufficient integrity for documents within them to be usable as evidence in courts of law.
5. It is also important in the context of this archival material that search engines, both on departmental websites and on Direct.Gov, are able to return relevant and specific hits where exact titles or other precise information is searched for.
6. If you have any queries relating to this response then please contact Guy Daines, Director of Policy & Advocacy at CILIP. The contact details are: Guy Daines, Director (Policy & Advocacy), CILIP, 7 Ridgmount Street, London, WC1E 7AE. Email: [guy.daines@ciolip.org.uk](mailto:guy.daines@ciolip.org.uk) Tel: 020 7255 0632

Peter Griffiths  
President  
CILIP  
April 2009

Charity Number: 313014