

# WORLD OF WONDERS SHAPING TOMORROW

知の創造

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## PREFACE

*World of Wonders* looks at some of the latest trends that are shaping the world. Each of the chapters examines a topic or issue that affects our lives today, or that will change our lives in the future. We hope you will find these topics interesting and thought provoking, and that they will stimulate you to learn more about these issues.

The topics covered in the 20 essays cover a lot of ground. They range from a new look at the very familiar, such as the nature of money and new uses for silk, through the impact of demographic change on the job market and health services, to a vision of the future that includes robot surgeons and synthetic meat. We hope that you will actively seek to develop your own opinions on the issues raised in this book, and that you will debate them vigorously.

As well as notes in Japanese following each essay, each chapter contains a pre-reading vocabulary exercise, and post-reading exercises are presented to test your comprehension of the essays.

Finally, while we have tried to ensure that the material in this book is up-to-date, due to the fast-changing nature of some of the topics, it is inevitable that by the time the book is published, some things may have changed.

We hope you enjoy the book.

Anthony Sellick

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# Information Overload

## Chapter 1

### WORDS TO KNOW

Choose a word from the list below to complete each sentence.

1. He \_\_\_\_\_ tried to place the blame for his crime on an innocent person.
2. She chose to \_\_\_\_\_ her parents and refused to marry him.
3. The diamond was huge but nearly worthless because of its many \_\_\_\_\_.
4. We must be \_\_\_\_\_ when investigating claims of alien visits.
5. The crop circles that appeared around the world are a good example of a \_\_\_\_\_.

hoax

flaws

skeptical

insidiously

defy

### READING

① 02~06



**1** Today, we can get all kinds of information, from weather reports to medical advice via our computers and our mobile phones. In addition, many governments are allowing the public easy access to more and more information, helping us to get a better idea of the state of our nations and the effectiveness of our politicians than ever before. The Information Age is a democratic age: *anyone* can consume, analyze and provide information. For example, in addition to traditional media like newspapers and TV, we can now get news and information from blogs and media websites like YouTube. The information we find can help us to live better, healthier, more enjoyable lives.

**2** However, the sheer volume of information available to us today poses a problem: with so much information available, how do we judge its quality?

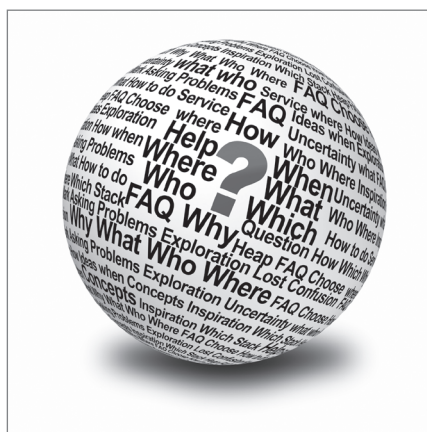
erroneous information we encounter is the  
 result of ignorance or carelessness by the  
 authors, but there are also many cases of  
 misinformation being distributed deliberately.

seemed to be a high quality history website about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. but which actually sought to devalue Dr. King's achievements by spreading lies about his life.

influenced by the political positions of their editors. This can sometimes lead to opinions being presented as if they were facts. In 2006, the *Project for Excellence in Journalism* found that while personal opinions were presented in 4 percent of news reports on CNN, they occurred in 68 percent of the reports on the rival Fox News Channel. More insidiously, a Fox News program secretly altered photographs of *New York Times* journalists, making them look older and uglier.


25 decision about buying a product, but we should still be careful as such comments are sometimes faked. In 2010, a British university professor was discovered to have posted positive comments about his own books (and negative comments about his rivals' books) on the Amazon website. Always keep in mind the old adage, "If it seems too good to be true, it probably is."

**4** <sup>CD</sup><sub>05</sub> So what else can we do to identify and protect ourselves from poor quality information? A good approach is to take everything with a pinch of salt. Journalists are trained to ask *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* about any information, and it is good practice for us to do the same. For example, we should consider *who* has produced the information: are they experts, amateurs



**The huge amount of information available to us today can leave us feeling lost and confused, or even mislead us, unless we ask the right questions of it.**

or cranks? *When* was the information produced? If it is too old, then maybe it will not be of use to you. *What* was the source of the information? Has the writer made any references to other sources of information? If there are any references, check them to see if they really say what the writer has claimed. If there are not, try to find an independent source of information and see if the two agree. *Where* did the money come from? Knowing who paid the writer can be very informative as many organizations will only fund information that presents them in a good light. Consequently, knowing where the money came from can be a good guide to errors and bias in information. *Why* was the information produced? Is it intended simply to explain something, try to sell us something, or try to get our support? A simple explanation is unlikely to be deliberately misleading, but could be factually incorrect. Information produced in order to persuade us to buy a product or to support a viewpoint will contain some biases at the very least. Finally, *how* did you find the information? If you simply found it via a link on a website, then it will probably have all of the same flaws that the original website had. Try doing a different search and looking for different sources of information. You can also check to see if the website has been listed on a webpage that identifies and describes Internet hoaxes and urban legends, such as snopes.com.

**5**  In order for us to best take advantage of all the opportunities that the Information Age brings us, it is necessary for us to maintain a skeptical attitude. By questioning, rather than simply accepting, the information we come across, we can make sure that we are rarely deceived and always end up better, rather than less, informed.

## NOTES

**British Medical Journal** 「ブリティッシュ・メディカル・ジャーナル」世界5大医学誌の1つ  
**Project for Excellence in Journalism = PEJ** 「卓越したジャーナリズムのためのプロジェクト」米国の非営利・独立系調査研究機関Pew Research Center (2004年設立、本部ワシントン)が行う7つのプロジェクトの1つ。特定の主義・主張に偏らない客観的事実に基づいた分析を旨とし、シンクタンクではなく「ファクトタンク(fact tank)」と称している。*The State of the News Media*を毎年発行。米国メディアの現在を知る最良の報告書の1つといえる。**CNN = Cable News Network** 米ケーブルテレビのニュース専門放送局 **Fox News Channel = FNC** 「FOXニュース」米ニュース専門放送局 **If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.** 「うまい話には訳がある」(ことわざ) **take [it] with a pinch of salt** 「話半分に聞く」 **snopes.com** Eメールを介して人々の間に広がっている都市伝説や、ネット上のうわさ話などが読めるウェブサイト。米カリフォルニア州在住のMikkelsen夫妻が1995年にサイトを立ち上げて管理しながら、そうしたうわさ話や情報の真相をリサーチしている。2001年9月11日以降はアクセス数が10倍に増加した。

## QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

*Check the best answer for each question.*

1. What does the passage imply about the information available to us?
  - a. ☐ That the amount of information is so large that it is overwhelming.
  - b. ☐ That it is relatively easy to cope with the amount of information available.
  - c. ☐ That we need to develop critical skills to assess the information available.
  - d. ☐ That we can rely on the providers of the information not to mislead us.
2. Which of the following is *not* given as a reason why incorrect information is sometimes produced?
  - a. ☐ In order to change our opinions about various topics.
  - b. ☐ In order to sell us products that are fake or which do not work.
  - c. ☐ In order to fool us into believing something which is not true.
  - d. ☐ In order to show us how to judge the quality of information.
3. What does the passage tell us about customer comments and review sites?
  - a. ☐ That they are useful tools and always reliable.
  - b. ☐ That they are useful tools and usually reliable.
  - c. ☐ That they are useful tools but nearly always unreliable.
  - d. ☐ That they are useful tools but rarely reliable.

4. How does the passage suggest we approach the information we are given?
- a. ☐ That we should trust the information providers.
  - b. ☐ That we should remember that information providers sometimes make mistakes.
  - c. ☐ That we should treat all information as unreliable and incorrect.
  - d. ☐ That we should consider the reasons the information was produced and its purpose.

## SUMMARY

① 07  5

*Fill each space with the best word from the list below.*

The huge 1)\_\_\_\_\_ of information available to us today brings with it a problem. Amongst the useful and reliable information that we need is information that is 2)\_\_\_\_\_ or which has an unwelcome 3)\_\_\_\_\_ contained within it. If we treat these sources of information as reliable, we are in danger of being 4)\_\_\_\_\_ by it. Instead, we must 5)\_\_\_\_\_ approach information as if we were journalists investigating it in order to protect ourselves from error. By identifying 5)\_\_\_\_\_ and distorted information, we can ensure that we make the most of the information we 6)\_\_\_\_\_.

consume   volume   misleading   erroneous   bias   deceived