

Evaluator's feedback form (Christine Hine)

Focus on the academic content that the material provided covers all the areas you would expect to see, references you would expect to see. If you could approach the task as you would a peer review for an academic paper.

This will be an invaluable resource. It is clear, it's comprehensive, and it makes sensible evaluations of prevailing opinion and practice.

I have a few suggestions for improvements to increase coverage of important issues, add to the interactivity, or lend clarity:

1. It might be useful to include some possible research scenarios as an exercise for the user, offering them the opportunity to make a decision about the appropriate course of action in terms of confidentiality, informed consent etc. I use these in teaching and they work quite well to bring issues to life for students. It might make this module more accessible for someone who doesn't have a particular piece of research that they want to do in mind. You could even start with them, ask people to make decisions, and then offer them up again at the end of the module so people can judge whether they've changed their minds about what they would do.
2. There isn't much discussion of the issues surrounding research with minors. Bruckman has faced up to this issue – see also the Buchanan book, and also Sonia Livingston's work for a broader background on children using the Internet.
3. I didn't see a mention of Elizabeth Buchanan's book, <http://www.idea-group.com/books/details.asp?id=4210>, which would add to the coverage of some important issues, like the question of minors.
4. It would really help if the readings for all of the learning activities were available online. I think the ones for the exercise on models of ethics are on the web – any chance of linking to them more directly, or gaining permission to include them on the site?
5. The glossary is a bit under-used. Any chance of including more terms, or at least making sure that the relevant terms are connected by links from the text to the glossary, to allow for jumping to the relevant definition? Actually, hyper-linking could be much more used throughout to make links between sections of the text, e.g. to link between discussion of informed consent guidelines and discussion of privacy.
6. In the guidelines on informed consent you say that in open access forums “informed consent is not essential” – but in the discussion on privacy you show that it is much more nuanced than that. Could you say “informed consent may not always be essential” to leave it more open?
7. It might be worth saying a little more about processes of ethical clearance. Institutional Review Boards and the like are mentioned a few times in passing, but it might be worth giving a little more detail on how the process generally works, since often readers of this resource will be inexperienced researchers.
8. In the discussion of deception, it is worth explaining that the boundaries are not clear cut. A researcher may set out to tell everyone concerned about their research, but as new participants join a forum and as existing participants forget, the research can effectively become more covert as time goes on. The issue can be particularly troubling in online forums with high turnover, like chat rooms.
9. It's not entirely clear what relevance the discussion of flaming and the exercise on different forms of flame has for an understanding of ethics. Could you be a bit more specific about why it's there, and what it adds for a researcher?

10. The section on online libel is rather selective – for example mentioning the ECPA, but not giving much context, country or subsequent developments. What are the implications for researchers?

Minor points

- The description of models of ethics is a bit opaque – could you clarify, or define terms in the glossary?
- The description of Hudson and Bruckman (2004) under “Deception” isn’t clear – how could members ask them to leave when they hadn’t posted a message?
- Under “digital divide” the figures are a little odd – is it really 60% for Sri Lanka? – and I’m not sure that they transparently make the point that you want to get across.
- Under “The Racial Ravine” the sentence beginning “Racist practices also proliferate...” is too long.
- FAQs – first question, last line – should that be “global reach” instead of “global research”?

Any technical problems you experienced broken links etc.

Location	Description
N/A	

Provide a description of your general impressions of the site.

I like it. I found the interface a bit busy on first impression, but I got used to it, and also came to accept the style of arrows opening up new sections of text. There is a lot of scrolling down through text, but I guess that’s inevitable for a content rich resource. The print version was invaluable – I suspect this will also get used a lot. The personal reference list is a great feature, particularly the facility for endnote download. Perfect for the magpie researcher, picking up interesting bits to read here and there.

Have they come across a resource like this before?

There is nothing quite like this – and I know from queries that come to me that a lot of people are looking for sound advice about online research. It will serve a real need.

Could you describe how you might use the site?

I’ll certainly recommend it to students etc. I’m not sure how many will work through the whole thing, but I’m sure many will dip into it and find it invaluable. Those who do complete the whole thing will gain a vast amount from it. I think both kinds of user will want to cite your work and your advice – there should be clear guidelines on how they should do so on the site.