It Takes an Expert to Believe Real Nonsense

By Barbara D. Phillips

I'm no expert. But neither, it seems, are the "experts" who get taken in by hoaxers and fraudsters, forgers and phonies, just like the rest of us.

It takes no special skill to draw this conclusion—just a newspaper subscription, a long memory and the Web.

Take this week's papers, which informed us that Israel's Antiquities Authority has determined that the burial box purported to be that of Jesus' brother, James, was a fake. The box was quite old, but the inscription all too modern.

Score one for the experts? Not quite. As the New York Times—which has acquired its own close knowledge of fakery recently—reported Thursday: "Scholars have been debating the authenticity since the ossuary became public last October, and some leading experts said they believed that it was genuine."

Sound familiar? It should.

Do you believe in fairies? Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the hyper-rational Sherlock Holmes, clapped his hands after two English girls, in 1917, produced photographs of the wee winged creatures. Photography experts and believers in spiritualism—who included Sir Arthur—declared themselves convinced of their authenticity.

Britain wasn't alone in 20th-century fakery.

That same year, the discovery of a second Piltdown Man, said to be an English ancestor of Homo sapiens, was announced in Britain, gulling even those skeptics who had been wary of a similar find in a Sussex quarry in 1912. Finally, it seemed, Britain had a human forebear to call its own. It wasn't until 1953 that the Piltdown skulls were proved to be frauds. (A 1983 article even accused Doyle of perpetrating the Piltdown hoax!)

But Britain had no lock on 20th-century fakery and faux expertise. Take Clifford Irving, who in the early 1970s claimed to have conducted hundreds of hours of interviews with the reclusive Howard Hughes in "editing" the billionaire's "autobiography." Handwriting experts hired by Irving's publisher "authenticated" letters that he said were written by Hughes. Irving's work was proved a fraud only when the recluse himself came forward in January 1972 to deny its authenticity.

"I only wish I were still in the movie business," Hughes said in a telephone news conference, "because I don't remember any script as wild or as stretching the imagination as this yarn has turned out to be."



Brotherton Collection, Leeds University Library

Smart people bought the fairy hoax.

A decade later, Der Stern and Newsweek magazines, handwriting experts and a prominent historian were roped in by Konrad Kujau's so-called "Hitler Diaries." As sniggle.net notes: "Handwriting experts called in to judge samples of the writing in the diaries announced that the writing perfectly matched other samples of Hitler's script—what they didn't know was that the comparison samples had also been forged by Kujau! One of the most prominent oopses came from Hugh Trevor-Roper, Oxford fellow, Cambridge Master, and author of 'The Last Days of Hitler.'"

And also in the 1980s, bombings in Salt Lake City, Utah led to the murder conviction of forger and document dealer Mark Hofmann and to the discovery that he had managed to fool authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hofmann had created a cache of documents calling into question teachings about the early church.

So, are there any experts with anything to say about the problems with experts? Well, there's at least one Web page devoted to the phenomenon.

The Experts and Expertise page of Tim van Gelder's Critical Thinking on the Web (www.philosophy.unimelb.edu.au/reason/critical) makes no claims for comprehensiveness. Which might be just the right approach for an irreverent repository devoted to the proposition "that experts are generally less expert than we (or they) think; and that we all ought to be thinking much more critically about how much expertise the experts actually have."

Mr. van Gelder, a philosophy professor in Melbourne, Australia, has pulled together summaries of and links to a baker's dozen essays and studies that shake the foundations of authority in art, business, criminal justice, psychotherapy, wine snobbery, literary criticism and punditry.

Among the highlights: Alan Lee's experiment that, as Mr. van Gelder puts it, "shows that art experts can't distinguish between Mondrian's paintings and randomly generated pseudo-Mondrians"; and the confessions of Steven Moss, an expert witness, who says, "I quickly learned not to worry whether or not I was right."

Finally, consider Mark Halpern's look at punditry: "Experts and authorities are forever making predictions . . . , being proved wrong by events, and then continuing their career as experts or authorities without missing a beat; there seems to be little reason to be careful." Little wonder that they aren't.

Ms. Phillips is deputy editor of The Wall Street Journal's Leisure & Arts page.

Comments?

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Business Europe/ *By Bill Gates*

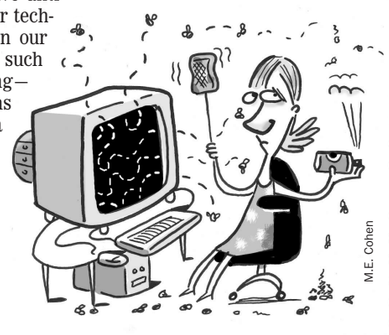
Why I Hate Spam

Seattle

Like almost everyone who uses e-mail, I receive a ton of spam every day. Much of it offers to help me get out of debt or get rich quick. It would be funny if it weren't so irritating.

But spam is worse than irritating. It is a drain on business productivity, an increasingly costly waste of time and resources that clogs corporate networks and distracts workers. Among consumers, it spreads scams, pornography and even computer viruses. Worse, spammers prey on less sophisticated e-mail users, including children, threatening their safety and privacy. And as everyone struggles to sift spam from their inboxes, valid messages are sometimes overlooked or deleted, which makes e-mail less useful and reliable as a channel for communication and legitimate e-commerce. In short, spam threatens to undo much of the good that e-mail has achieved.

As part of our drive to create a more trustworthy computing environment, this month, Microsoft filed 15 lawsuits in the U.S. and U.K. against companies and individuals alleged to have sent billions of spam messages in violation of state and federal laws. In addition to filing civil lawsuits and taking other enforcement actions, we are significantly stepping up our efforts to fight spam through technological innovation and cooperation with government and industry leaders. We are developing more effective anti-spam filters and other technologies that build on our research into fields such as machine learning—the design of systems that learn from data and grow smarter over time. These "smart" systems are vital to the fight against spam because every defensive action causes spammers to change their tactics. Technology, to be effective, must continuously adapt too.



M.E. Cohen

Already, spam filters built into MSN and Hotmail servers block 2.4 billion messages a day before they reach subscribers' inboxes. We have assembled a vast and fast-growing database of spam, which will be used by a forthcoming version of our Outlook e-mail software to block spam more effectively. And a new version of our Exchange e-mail server will include advanced anti-spam features. Our goal is to do everything possible to secure e-mail systems with servers that monitor and control the points of entry.

But a single company can't stem the tide of spam alone. So we are working with other industry leaders such as AOL, Yahoo! and Earthlink on a range of joint initiatives. For example, we are battling spammers who set up numerous e-mail accounts and move from service to service to avoid detection. To put an end to this shell game, we are sharing information so that we can keep tabs on roving spammers and shut them down more effectively. Spammers also go to great lengths to conceal or "spoof" their identities, so we are partnering with other service providers to identify and restrict mail that conceals its source. And we are creating a system to verify sender addresses, much as recipients' addresses are verified today.

A key to eliminating spam is establishing clear guidelines for legitimate commercial e-mail. With industry and consumer groups, we are developing best-practice guidelines to help responsible companies understand how to reach their customers without spamming them. Congress could help by providing a strong incentive for businesses to adopt e-mail best practices. Our proposal is to create a regulatory "safe harbor" status for senders who comply with e-mail guidelines confirmed by an U.S. Federal Trade Commission-approved self-regulatory body. Senders who do not comply would have to insert an "ADV:" label—standing for advertisement—in the subject line of all unsolicited commercial e-mail. This would enable computer users either to accept ADV-labeled mail or to have it deleted automatically.

As less junk mail reaches recipients—and violators face stiffer sanctions for illegal activities—the financial incentives for spammers will decrease, and spamming will lose its appeal.

Then maybe we can all focus on the e-mail that's actually *worth* reading.

Mr. Gates is chairman and chief software architect of Microsoft Corporation.

Kyoto's Costs to European Businesses Are Rising

By Waldemar Ingdahl

The Kyoto agreement is becoming a significant burden for the EU.

In the EU's current Environmental Action Program, the limitation of climate change has been upgraded to one of the European Commission's top priorities. The EU has committed itself to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by 8% in the years 2008-2012 compared to emissions in the year 1990.

Last month the commissioner for the environment, Margot Wallström, gave a speech at a Brussels climate change conference about the implementation of the Kyoto protocol for the EU. She expressed great worry over the European Environment Agency's latest report on the increase of the emission of greenhouse gases. The EU could well miss its Kyoto targets, and she particularly stressed air conditioners in cars and other emissions of the automobile industry as factors in the growth. But the worries of the commissioner should be elsewhere.

At the time Kyoto was negotiated, EU member states had a built-in advantage over the U.S. That is because Great Britain was switching from coal to gas for electricity production and the East German economy had crumbled along with the Berlin Wall, which forced a the shutdown of many of its heavy industries. As a result, British and German carbon dioxide emissions subsequently came down well below their 1990 levels and provided a cushion for growth of emissions.

But economic growth, combined with Germany's decision to phase out nuclear energy and greater-than-projected coal use among EU member countries, will likely leave the EU about 10% short of its 2012 target for emission levels.

The EU's position is that, because the energy sector is the sector that contributes the most to global warming, the level of energy consumed must be reduced through structural changes. The commission wants to achieve this through several methods, such as taxation, improving the efficiency of production, improving the effectiveness of consumption, and supplanting old sources of energy with alternatives such as wind power.

The strategy of taxing energy in order to reduce its use raises the costs of production, and decreases EU corporations' competitiveness on world markets. This is why the European Emissions Trading Directive was approved, in order to make energy use as cost efficient as possible. It is scheduled to come into effect in 2005 and allows companies to sell surplus emissions allowances.

It is no wonder that the EU is keen for emissions trading to begin as well outside the EU area. The bloc won't be able to meet its targets without purchasing excess credits from elsewhere. This puts Russia, if it ratifies the Kyoto agreement, in an advantageous position relative to the EU, since the collapse of Soviet-era industry has left Russia well below its 1990 emissions levels, with lots of emissions credits to sell to EU members that do not meet their goals.

But even setting aside the increasing voices of dissent on the scientific justifications of the Kyoto agreement's assumptions, the goals behind the EU's emission-trading scheme, and its effects on the EU's society and economy, seem dubious.

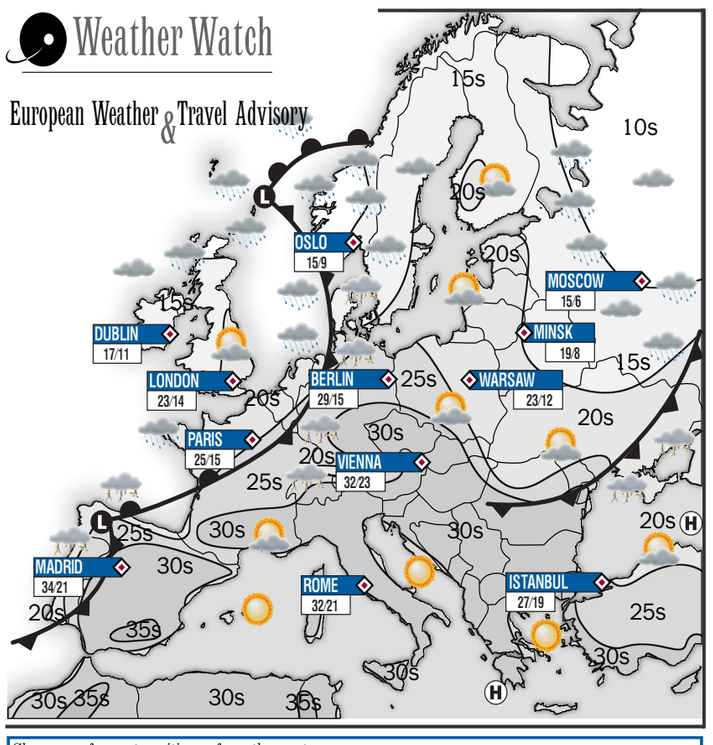
Functioning markets require experimentation; they cannot be created from scratch by a diktat from the top. In a system of emission rights, governments create an artificial shortage of energy and subsequently allocate emissions rights to individual corporations. These quotas would mostly benefit a small number of large energy producers that would receive a sort of artificial monopoly on the right to generate so-called greenhouse gases. As a result, they have a vested interest in preventing any reversal of the artificial shortage, for instance as a result of technological breakthroughs or new climatological insights. In that case, their emission rights, which they may have bought for significant sums, would be worthless.

Elements of central planning would be incorporated into new areas of our market economies under the banner of exploiting market-based mechanism, which would represent a step backward in the trend toward more market and less government.

Mr. Ingdahl is CEO of the Swedish think tank Eudoxa.

Weather Watch

European Weather & Travel Advisory



Shown are forecast positions of weather systems and precipitation for Monday, Jun. 23, at noon local time. Temperature Zones represent highs for the day.
All forecasts and maps provided by **AccuWeather, Inc. © 2003**

Cold Front · Warm Front · Stationary

European Forecast

A cold front will push into Germany and southwestern Scandinavia today and cause rain and thunderstorms over these areas. Windy and cooler across England tomorrow with only a chance for a few showers. Another cold front will push across southwest Russia and produce scattered thunderstorms ahead of it. Settled across Italy and the lower Balkans.

European Travel Advisory

Travel delays due to rain are likely today across Oslo and Moscow. Berlin will have delays in the afternoon due to thunderstorms. Stockholm may have a late-day delay due to showers. Dry weather is expected from Madrid through Rome, Athens, Istanbul and Ankara.

European Weather

City	Monday High °C	°F	Low °C	°F	Wea	Tuesday High °C	°F	Low °C	°F	Wea
Algarve	26	79	15	59	s	25	77	16	61	s
Amsterdam	21	70	14	57	pc	20	68	15	59	s
Athens	31	88	22	71	s	33	91	24	75	s
Barcelona	30	86	23	73	s	31	88	23	73	s
Belgrade	33	91	21	70	pc	34	93	19	66	pc
Berlin	29	84	15	59	c	24	75	11	52	pc
Bonn	27	80	13	55	t	24	75	13	55	pc
Brussels	27	80	13	55	pc	25	77	14	57	s
Budapest	33	91	23	73	pc	34	93	19	66	pc
Copenhagen	19	66	11	52	r	18	64	11	52	c
Dublin	17	62	11	52	pc	18	64	12	53	pc
Frankfurt	32	89	15	59	pc	26	79	14	57	s
Geneva	31	88	19	66	pc	30	86	20	68	c
Helsinki	19	66	10	50	c	20	68	10	50	c
Istanbul	27	80	19	66	s	31	88	22	71	s
Lisbon	24	75	15	59	pc	22	71	15	59	pc
London	23	73	14	57	pc	24	75	15	59	s
Madrid	34	93	21	70	pc	35	95	17	62	pc
Milan	33	91	22	71	pc	34	93	22	71	pc
Minsk	19	66	8	46	c	22	71	4	39	pc
Moscow	15	59	6	43	t	18	64	8	46	c
Nice	31	88	23	73	s	31	88	23	73	pc
Oslo	15	59	9	48	r	16	61	9	48	r
Paris	25	77	15	59	pc	25	77	14	57	s
Prague	32	89	19	66	pc	27	80	14	57	s
Rome	32	89	21	70	s	32	89	21	70	s
Strasbourg	32	89	17	62	pc	29	84	17	62	s
Stockholm	22	71	9	48	pc	16	61	8	46	r
Venice	32	89	21	70	pc	32	89	22	71	pc
Vienna	32	89	23	73	pc	31	88	18	64	pc
Warsaw	23	73	12	53	pc	23	73	10	50	pc
Zurich	31	88	19	66	pc	30	86	18	64	pc

World Weather

City	Monday High °C	°F	Low °C	°F	Wea	Tuesday High °C	°F	Low °C	°F	Wea
Algiers	34	93	22	71	s	36	97	22	71	s
Baghdad	42	107	22	71	s	44	111	23	73	s
Bangkok	31	88	25	77	t	32	89	25	77	sh
Bogota	20	68	11	52	sh	20	68	11	52	r
Beijing	27	80	18	64	r	32	89	25	77	s
Buenos Aires	19	66	10	50	pc	18	64	8	46	pc
Cairo	36	97	19	66	s	39	102	20	68	s
Caracas	24	75	16	61	r	24	75	17	62	r
Chicago	31	88	19	66	pc	31	88	20	68	pc
Hong Kong	30	86	26	79	pc	30	86	26	79	c
Honolulu	31	88	23	73	pc	31	88	23	73	s
Jakarta	30	86	23	73	t	30	86	23	73	c
Jerusalem	29	84	15	59	s	31	88	17	62	s
Johannesburg	18	64	5	41	c	13	55	-1	31	r
Kinshasa	29	84	21	70	pc	30	86	21	70	pc
Los Angeles	22	71	16	61	pc	23	73	17	62	pc
Manila	32	89	23	73	t	32	89	24	75	t
Mexico City	26	79	13	55	c	26	79	13	55	c
Miami	31	88	24	75	t	32	89	24	75	t
Nairobi	23	73	9	48	c	23	73	10	50	r
New Delhi	41	106	31	88	s	39	102	25	77	pc
New York	31	88	23	73	pc	31	88	23	73	s
San Francisco	19	66	12	53	pc	23	73	14	57	s
Santiago	16	61	4	39	pc	18	64	8	46	s
Sao Paulo	22	71	15	59	s	22	71	15	59	s
Seoul	26	79	16	61	r	25	77	13	55	r
Sydney	16	61	5	41	s	16	61	5	41	pc
Tokyo	25	77	19	66	c	23	73	18	64	r
Toronto	29	84	17	62	s	28	82	18	64	pc
Washington	32	89	22	71	s	32	89	22	71	s

Legend: s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn- snow, i-ice.

Who's News

Operations Chief at Reuters Steps Down Amid Cost Cutting

LONDON—**Reuters Group** PLC, which is rapidly cutting costs to cope with a steep downturn in the financial-services industry, said its chief operating officer had resigned and the company was abolishing the position.

Philip Green, 50 years old, who joined Reuters in 1999 as chief executive of Reuters Trading Systems, a unit that oversaw foreign-exchange dealing, will leave the company on June 30, Reuters said. Mr. Green wasn't available for comment, according to a company spokesman.

"The purpose of this management change is to slim down and bring greater focus to senior management as we reshape Reuters's business," Chief Executive Tom Glocer said in a statement. "We have undertaken to reduce costs, and I believe it is imperative that we cut expenditure at every level in the company."

In February, Reuters announced a new program called Fast Forward, which, largely through 3,000 job cuts, is designed to save £440 million (€630.4 million) annually by the end of 2005. In addition to those cuts, the company already had shed nearly 3,000 jobs during the past couple of years.

Reuters said the chief operating officer's functions would be taken over by the Group Management Committee, a 12-member panel chaired by Mr. Glocer. The company said the move didn't signal any strategic change.

Reuters has been hurt by heavy layoffs in investment banking and other sectors that use its financial data, which account for the bulk of Reuters's revenue. The company's shares have shed nearly 80% of their value the past two years.

Job of the Day

Vice President, European Securitization

Company: Exchange Consulting Group Ltd.

Location: London

Available as of: June 23, 2003

Job Excerpt: European firm seeks executives with experience working within the CMBS, RMBS, CDO and conduit markets. Must be able to deliver effectively in both an originating and execution capacity. A high degree of credibility is required.

The editors of **CareerJournal Europe.com** have selected what they think is the top job of the day as listed in the advertisements on their site.

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