



The ethical duty to preserve the quality of scientific information

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The commitment to communicate and divulge the knowledge acquired during his/her professional activity is certainly one of the ethical duties of the geologist. However nowadays, in the Internet era, the spreading of knowledge involves potential risks that the geologist should be aware of. These risks require a careful analysis aimed to mitigate their effects. The Internet may in fact contribute to spread (e.g. through websites like Wikipedia) information badly or even incorrectly presented. The final result could be an impediment to the diffusion of knowledge and a reduction of its effectiveness, which is precisely the opposite of the goal that a geologist should pursue. Specific criteria aimed to recognize incorrect or inadequate information would be, therefore, extremely useful. Their development and application might avoid, or at least reduce, the above mentioned risk. Ideally, such criteria could be also used to develop specific algorithms to automatically verify the quality of information available all over the Internet. A possible criterion will be here presented for the quality control of knowledge and scientific information. An example of its application in the field of geology will be provided, to verify and correct a piece of information available on the Internet. The proposed criterion could be also used for the simplification of the scientific information and the increase of its informative efficacy.