

THE ART OF THE LINK

(REPRISED & REVISED)

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ARE YOU LINKING?

- “Digital first.”
- But it often doesn’t fit our copy flow.
- And it’s not automatic for veteran writers (or editors).
- But it is the essence of an interactive report.

I SEE THAT YOU'RE NOT ...

Jury selection begins for former Garden Plain coach charged with child sex crimes

By Hurst Laviana
The Wichita Eagle

Published Monday, April 1, 2013, at 4:20 p.m.
Updated Monday, April 1, 2013, at 4:21 p.m.

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Todd Puetz, 40, is facing felony charges of electronic solicitation, attempted aggravated indecent liberties with a child and attempted criminal sodomy.

The charges, which were filed in November 2011, accuse him of using electronic communication to try to "entice or solicit" sex from someone he thought was a 15-year-old girl.

Puetz was one of seven men arrested after a two-day sting operation involving Wichita police and federal law enforcement agents. His trial is being held in the courtroom of District Judge Ben Burgess.

... BUT SHOULDN'T YOU?

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WHY WE LINK

- To add background and context.
- To show our work, sourcing.
- To build credibility.
- For reader convenience.
- Search-engine optimization.
- To be citizens of the Internet.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- You don't have to put this stuff in every story.
- In fact, Web ideal of concision suggests you shouldn't.
- Help the reader out.
- Much of your Web audience are one-off readers ... who will often lack any context.

SOURCING & CREDIBILITY

- Do you do Web research? Show it.
- Give reader opportunity to check your work.
- Any online source of news information should be linked. (News releases, video, transcripts, other news reports.)
- A link can imply endorsement. (But doesn't *have* to.)

READER CONVENIENCE

- If you mention it, link it. But ...
- Don't go overboard. Your readers can use Google.
- Link stuff that's not easily found.
- Don't link every proper name.
- Imagine that some significant number of your readers will follow the link. If you can't, don't.
- Respect the reader's time. Don't cry wolf with a link.

SEARCH ENGINE VISIBILITY

- Google makes connections based on links.
- Links should be directly relevant to the story you're telling. (Don't cry wolf.)
- The “anchor text” matters. (More later ...)

CULTURE OF THE NET

- Good netizens drive traffic to sites they find helpful.
- The Golden Rule. You get what you give.
- Links are the basis of the Net. There's no Net without links, and you're not really on the Web unless you're linking.
- Think about blogs, social media ... all the things that get people excited about the Net.
- It is INTERACTIVE.

BUT ISN'T A LINK AN ENDORSEMENT?

- Not in this framework.
- Sometimes sources are being refuted or rebutted, and the reader should have context to decide if you're right.
- Anchor text can convey dubiousness.

HOW TO LINK BADLY

For the complete schedule, click [here](#).

- Patronizes the reader.
- Poor anchor text.
- Breaks the fourth wall.
- Tiny target.

A BETTER LINK

The complete schedule is on the festival's website.

The complete schedule includes 14 films, three shorts programs, four workshops and a work in progress.

- Zen about the link.
- Descriptive anchor text.
- Narrative maintains integrity.
- Reasonable target.

BUT NOT ...

The complete schedule is on the festival's website.

- Wrong description.
- False cue to reader.

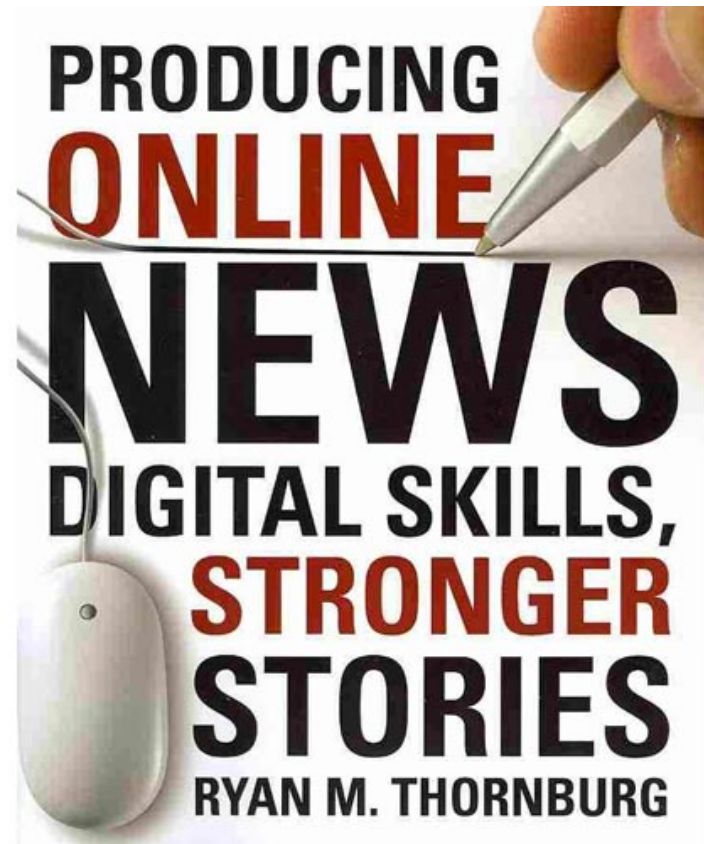
HOW ABOUT THIS?

The Kansas City Star reported that the woman would face murder charges.

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INTEGRAL VS. INCIDENTAL

- Two basic kinds of links.
- They should be treated differently.
- Credit to Ryan Thornburg, University of North Carolina (See his text: *Producing Online News*, CQ Press)



INTEGRAL LINK

- Relatively high likelihood readers might click.
- Possibly the inspiration for your post/story, or a key source work, or an important basis of attribution.
- Anchor text should be longer.
- Anchor text should typically include a verb.

The Wichita Business Journal is reporting that Boeing will close its Wichita plant by 2014.

INCIDENTAL LINK

- Relatively low likelihood readers might click (but not too low).
- Background, definitions, asides.
- Anchor text should be shorter.
- Anchor text should typically be a noun or phrase.

One of Boeing Wichita's key programs is maintenance and modifications on the [VC-25](#).

DON'T OVERDO INCIDENTAL LINKS

Wichita State University encourages cooperative work projects. For example, students and researchers at the College of Engineering and the National Institute for Aviation Research work with Spirit AeroSystems on composite materials.

DON'T OVERDO INCIDENTAL LINKS

- Not every proper name.
- Not what's easily Googled.
- Imagine a need for a reader to get to the information at that instant.
- Avoid clutter.
- Be an editor and respect the reader's time and attention. Don't cry wolf.

GOOD ANCHOR TEXT

- Length reflects importance.
- The words tell readers what they'll get when they click.
- Use whole phrases, when practical.
- Don't include a terminal comma or period. (Except ...)
- Don't include initial or terminal spaces.
- Can convey dubiousness or non-endorsement.

THE DUBIOUS LINK

An unsourced and speculative report from the blog Sunflower Secrets suggests that the Koch Brothers are illuminati. But the Gnomes of Zurich — who frequent supersecret world-mastermind circles — tell The Wichita Eagle they're unfamiliar with either Koch scion.

KNOW THE CODING

`<p>`This is a short paragraph of text about Wichita State University. And because we are good netizens, we get ``to some background information about the school`` that we have linked. `</p>`

This is a short paragraph of text about Wichita State University. And because we are good netizens, we get [to some background information about the school](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wichita_State_University) that we have linked.

BAD FORM

- **BAD:** “Here is Koch Industries’ [complete press release.](#)”
- **BETTER:** “According to Koch’s [press release](#) ...”
- **BAD:** “[Click here](#) for more information.”
- **BETTER:** “Cessna’s website has [more information.](#)”
- **BAD:** “Make your reservation by [e-mailing Jim Smith.](#)”
- **BETTER:** “Make a reservation by sending an email to [jsmith@acme.com.](mailto:jsmith@acme.com)” (href=“mailto:jsmith@acme.com”)

GO ~~SHOCKERS~~ SOONERS!

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