



Snopes.com /ˈsnoʊps/, also known as the **Urban Legends Reference Pages**, is a [website](#) covering [urban legends](#), Internet rumors, [e-mail forwards](#), and other stories of unknown or questionable origin.^[4] It is a well-known resource for validating and debunking such stories in American popular culture,^[5] receiving 300,000 visits a day as of 2010.^[6]

Snopes.com was created by Barbara and David Mikkelson, a [California](#) couple who met in the alt.folklore.urban [newsgroup](#).^[7] The site is organized by topic and includes a message board where stories and pictures of questionable veracity may be posted.

History

David Mikkelson used the username "snopes" (the name of a family of often unpleasant people in the works of [William Faulkner](#))^{[8][9]} in the [Usenet](#) newsgroup alt.folklore.urban.^[10] The Mikkelsons created the Snopes site in 1995^[11] and later worked on it full-time.^{[7][9][11]} By mid-2014, Barbara Mikkelson had not written for the site "in several years,"^[1] and David Mikkelson hired employees to assist him from Snopes.com's message board. The Mikkelsons divorced around the same time, and Barbara no longer has an ownership stake in Snopes.com.^[1]

A television pilot based on the site, called *Snopes: Urban Legends*, was completed with American actor [Jim Davidson](#) as host, but major networks passed on the project.^[9]

Main site

Snopes aims to debunk or confirm widely spread urban legends. The site has

been referenced by news media and other sites, including [CNN](#),^[12] [Fox News Channel](#),^[13] [MSNBC](#),^[14] and Australia's [ABC](#) on its [Media Watch](#) program. Snopes' popular standing is such that some chain e-mail hoaxes claim to have been "checked out on 'Snopes.com'" in an attempt to discourage readers from seeking verification.^[15] As of March 2009, the site had approximately 6.2 million visitors per month.^[16]

The Mikkelsons have stressed the *reference* portion of the name *Urban Legends Reference Pages*, indicating that their intention is not merely to dismiss or confirm misconceptions and rumors but to provide evidence for such debunkings and confirmation as well.^[17] Where appropriate, pages are generally marked "undetermined" or "unverifiable" if the Mikkelsons feel there is not enough evidence to either support or disprove a given claim.^[18]

Lost Legends

In an attempt to demonstrate the perils of over-reliance on the internet as authority, the Mikkelsons assembled a series of fabricated urban folklore tales that they term "The Repository of Lost Legends".^[19] The name was chosen for its acronym, T.R.O.L.L., a reference to the early 1990s definition of the word [troll](#), meaning an Internet prank, of which David Mikkelson was a prominent practitioner.^[10]

One fictional legend alleged that the children's [nursery rhyme](#) "[Sing a Song of Sixpence](#)" was really a coded reference used by pirates to recruit members. This parodied a real false legend surrounding the supposed connection of "[Ring a Ring o' Roses](#)" to the [bubonic plague](#). Although the creators were sure that no one could believe a tale so ridiculous—and had added a link at the bottom of the page to another page explaining the hoax,^[20] and a message with the ratings reading "Note: Any relationship between these ratings and reality is purely coincidental"—eventually the legend was featured as true in an urban legends board game and television show.^[21]

Accuracy

[Jan Harold Brunvand](#), a [folklorist](#) who has written a number of books on urban legends and modern folklore, considered the site so comprehensive in 2004 that he decided to not launch one of his own.^[11]

David Mikkelson, the creator of the site, has said that the site receives more complaints of liberal bias than conservative bias, but insists that the same debunking standards are applied to all political urban legends.^[22] In 2012, [FactCheck.org](#) reviewed a sample of Snopes' responses to political rumors regarding [George W. Bush](#), [Sarah Palin](#), and [Barack Obama](#), and found them to be free from bias in all cases. FactCheck noted that Barbara Mikkelson was a Canadian citizen (and thus unable to vote in US elections) and David Mikkelson was an independent who was once registered as a Republican. "You'd be hard-pressed to find two more apolitical people," David Mikkelson told them.^{[22][23]} In 2012, [The Florida Times-Union](#) reported that [About.com](#)'s urban legends researcher found a "consistent effort to provide even-handed analyses" and that Snopes' cited sources and numerous reputable analyses of its content confirm its accuracy.^[24]

Critics of the site have falsely asserted that it is funded by [George Soros](#), or linked sites, but all of Snopes's revenue is from advertising on the site.^[2] The [New York Times](#) has stated:

All of Snopes's revenue — Mr. Mikkelson says he doesn't know what it is — come from ads. Facebook is not paying for its services. Nor is the billionaire George Soros funding the site, although that is sometimes asserted in anti-Snopes stories.

Traffic and users

As of April 2017, Snopes.com's [Alexa rating](#) was 1,794. Approximately 80% of its visitors originate from within the [United States](#).^[3] In 2010, the site attracted 7 to 8 million unique visitors in one month.^[25]

See also

- TruthOrFiction.com
- FactCheck.org
- [*The Straight Dope*](#)
- [*The Skeptic's Dictionary*](#)
- [*MythBusters*](#)
- [List of common misconceptions](#)

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