The explosion of news and other media content on the Internet has benefited society tremendously by giving individuals direct access to new, diverse sources of information. However, it has also created the burden for users of having to distinguish between trustworthy and questionable sources. The goal of this project, then, is to aid users in this decision making process. The final goal of such an endeavor would be to create a system that is capable of rating any website according to metrics of reliability and trustworthiness. While it is unlikely that the final result of this project will completely achieve that goal, it will seek to work towards it.

The backbone of the project will be a third party website through which users can enter search terms exactly as they would through Google. The site will then run their search in Google and evaluate each of the results. Finally, the search results will be displayed to the user along with an assessment (most likely a score from 1-10) of how much each site can be trusted.

The bulk of the work on this project will relate to how a site is evaluated. The two approaches currently being considered are outlined here. First, ratings could be based on the assessments given directly by the developer of the site. Certain websites could be given scores before the release of the site that are used when those specific sites are visited. This could be limiting, however, as there are too many sources available to have a small group of developers rank all of them. Thus, the second approach will be to pool data from the community of users. Each user will have a profile with the site where they rate websites or sources they are familiar with. Additionally, as they use the search tool they will be able to give feedback regarding the trustworthiness of sources they encounter or how good the ratings they received were. As more and more data is collected, the ratings will be expected to improve. The final product will likely encompass a blend of these two approaches. However, other ideas may be encountered during production that factor into the ratings system. A few preliminary thoughts include parsing comments after news articles to get a sense of what users thought, as well as checking citations and evaluating an article based on the trustworthiness of its sources.