

Irish student's Wikipedia hoax dupes newspapers

May 7 2009



An Irish student's fake quote on the Wikipedia online encyclopaedia has been used in newspaper obituaries around the world, the Irish Times reported.

An Irish student's fake quote on the Wikipedia online encyclopaedia has been used in newspaper obituaries around the world, the Irish Times reported.

The quote was attributed to French composer Maurice Jarre who died in March.

Shane Fitzgerald, 22, a final-year student studying sociology and economics at University College Dublin, told the [newspaper](#) he placed the quote on the website as an experiment when doing research on globalisation.

He quoted Oscar-winning composer Jarre as saying, "One could say my life itself has been one long soundtrack. Music was my life, music brought me to life, and music is how I will be remembered long after I leave this life.

"When I die there will be a final waltz playing in my head, that only I can hear."

The quote was posted on Wikipedia shortly after Jarre's death and later appeared in obituaries in major British, Indian and Australian newspapers.

Fitzgerald told the newspaper he picked Wikipedia because it was something a lot of journalists look at and it can be edited by anyone.

While he was wary about the ethical implications of using someone's death as a social experiment, he had carefully generated the quote so as not to distort or taint Jarre's life, he said.

Fitzgerald said he was shocked by the result of his experiment.

"I didn't expect it to go that far. I expected it to be in blogs and sites, but on mainstream quality papers? I was very surprised about," he said.

He said the hoax remained undiscovered for weeks until he e-mailed the newspapers that had been deceived to tell them that they had published an inaccurate quote.

The Irish Times said that despite some newspapers removing the quote from their websites or carrying a correction and the fact that it had been dropped by [Wikipedia](#), it remained intact on dozens of blogs, websites and newspapers.

(c) 2009 AFP

Citation: Irish student's Wikipedia hoax dupes newspapers (2009, May 7) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-05-irish-student-wikipedia-hoax-dupes.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.