

Criteria for Evaluating Internet Resources
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LTC Currents
Vol. II No. 1, Sept 2004, p.12
Revised May 2008

The wonderful thing about the internet is that anyone can publish on the web; but, total access facilitation does not make everyone an expert! Unlike books and journals that the library purchases, web resources rarely have editors or fact checkers. Understandably, due to the all inclusiveness of the web there are a plethora of fraudulent websites available and the quality of information and data varying greatly. Generally speaking, there are no web standards to ensure accuracy of information and data, but the following set of questions, when applied by students to a website, will help them to make a critical evaluation about the validity and appropriateness of internet resources.

1. Author?

- ✓ Is there an author or editor?
- ✓ Is the page signed by the author?
- ✓ Is there an email link to the author?

2. Is the author an expert in the subject area?

- ✓ Is there a personal name in the URL or Address box of the browser following a tilde (~) or a percentage sign (%)?

(e.g. www.seanet.com/~jimxc/Politics/June2005_1.html)

- ✓ What organization is the author affiliated with?

(e.g. from http://_____/ up to the first forward slash.)

Clues to website ownership:

Commercial site: .com, .biz, .net
US Government site: .gov, .mil, .us
Educational site: .edu
Non-profit site: .org
Geographical location: .ca, .uk, .jp, .fr

3. Content?

- ✓ Is the information provided covering a time period or a specific topic or is it comprehensive?
- ✓ What does this website or page offer that is not offered elsewhere?
- ✓ What is the point of view or bias of the article or website?
- ✓ Is the intent of the website to sell a product, to persuade, to entertain or to report findings?
- ✓ Are there advertisements on the website?
- ✓ Do the advertisements relate to content presented?

- ✓ Do the advertisements pre-determine content bias?
- ✓ Are additional print or electronic sources used to compliment the information provided?
- ✓ Is information provided disputed elsewhere?
- ✓ Is the depth and breadth of the content comparable to information you may find in an encyclopedia, book or article on your topic.
- ✓ Is the information provided specific enough for your research? If not, what can you do next?

4. Currency?

- ✓ When was the page last updated?
- ✓ Does up-to-date information matter for your research purposes?
- ✓ Are the links on the website updated?
- ✓ Have links expired or been moved?

Resources for Faculty

1. *Bibliography on Evaluating Web Resources*
<http://www.lib.vt.edu/help/instruct/evaluate/evalbiblio.html>
2. *Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask*
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>
3. *Evaluating Web Resources Checklist*
<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/instruction/science/evalweb.pdf>
4. *Ten C's for Evaluating Internet Sources*
<http://www.uwec.edu/library/research/guides/tenCs.pdf>
5. *Critical Evaluation of Resources on the Internet*
<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/criticalevaluation/index.cfm>