



Evaluating Internet Resources

Why Evaluate Web Sites?

- Because:** The QUALITY of information varies *TREMENDOUSLY*
- Because:** *ANYONE* can publish and post a Web site on the Internet
- Because:** Most Web sites *DON'T* employ *editors or fact checkers*
- Because:** You need *RELIABLE* resources for your class assignments

To ensure that information gathered off the Web is valuable and appropriate for use in a research paper, Internet users need to carefully evaluate the contents of the Web pages. Just because you locate a Web page on a subject, it does not mean the information it contains will be *accurate, reliable, or factual*; or that the person who wrote it is a *credible source*.

Criteria to Evaluate

AUTHORITY

- Who are the authors and what are their credentials? Is this listed on the page?
- Does the information come from another source? Who? An association? A company?
- Is the person or source qualified to give information on the topic?
- Has the site been reviewed, recommended or did it receive an award? By whom?
- Can the Webmaster or source be contacted from the Web site by email?

ACCURACY

- Do the authors give credit for information used in the site? Is there a bibliography?
- Has anyone verified or reviewed the information on the site?
- Is the information within the site up-to-date? Are other sites more current?
- When was the site last revised? Is it clear how often the site is updated?

APPROPRIATENESS

- What is the purpose of the site? To inform? To persuade? To entertain?
- Who is the intended audience? Why is the author presenting the information?
- Is the content of the site appropriate for my class? For my assignment?

OBJECTIVITY

- Is more than one side of the topic or issue presented? How fair are the authors?
- To what extent does the site present opinions versus facts?
- Does the site reflect a bias? Is there advertising of any kind on the Web site?

SCOPE & COVERAGE

- Is the subject matter covered in depth?
- Is the information on the site well-suited to its target audience?
- Does the overall content of the site fit together with the page's subject matter?

Other Considerations

- **DOMAIN NAME** (typically identified by a 3-letter abbreviation)

The domain name indicates the **type of source** (company, association, institution, etc.) where the Web document originated from. This, in turn, will help you to understand the PURPOSE of the Web site. Typically “**edu**” and “**gov**” sites are the most reliable and impartial.

<i>edu</i>	→	<i>educational institutions</i>
<i>com</i>	→	<i>commercial firms</i>
<i>gov</i>	→	<i>government agencies</i>
<i>mil</i>	→	<i>military (U.S.)</i>
<i>org</i>	→	<i>general organizations</i>
<i>net</i>	→	<i>computer networks</i>
<i>int</i>	→	<i>international organizations</i>
<i>uk</i>	→	<i>United Kingdom</i> <i>(similar abbreviations for other countries)</i>

- **ACCESSIBILITY**

Others may want to retrieve the Web sites you use for class assignments. Thus, Web sites must be *STABLE* or remain on the Internet for some time. They should also not contain *dead* or inactive links. If you find many dead links or multiple Web address changes, it may be an indication that the information on the site is of questionable value.

Web Sites on Evaluating Web Resources

- ◆ Grassian, E. *Thinking Critically about World Wide Web Resources*. UCLA College Library, University of California at Los Angeles. c1995.
<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/instruct/web/critical.htm>
- ◆ Harris, R. *Evaluating Internet Research Sources*
http://www.sccu.edu/faculty/R_Harris/evalu8it.htm
- ◆ Kirk, Elizabeth E. *Evaluating Information Found on the Internet*. Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University. c1996.
<http://milton.mse.jhu.edu:8001/research/education/net.html>

at the very least, always ask WHY?

- **why** is the author presenting this information?
- **why** is this site more valuable than another?
- **why** is this site appropriate for my assignment?