



“Information You Can Trust”

Alverno College Library

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.

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?
- Is statistical information labeled clearly and is it easy to read?
- Does the site include grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors?
- 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? If so, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?

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.

Resources for Evaluating Web Resources

- Barker, J. *Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask*. UC Berkeley Library. c. 2005. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>
- Evaluating Web Sites: Criteria and Tools
Olin and Uris Library. c. 2004. <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/webeval.html>
- Librarians' Index to the Internet c. 2005. <http://lii.org/>

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?***