How to Evaluate Internet Sites

There are millions of web pages available via the Internet. Many students rely on the Internet almost exclusively when conducting research. However, not all information found on the Internet is accurate. You should always examine the web page before using it as a research source. How do you know if a web page is a good research source?

When evaluating a web page look for the following points:

1. **Is the web site current?**
   A. Is there a copyright date?
   B. How long has it been since the site was updated?
   C. Is the website complete or still under construction?

2. **Who is the author? (authority)**
   A. Is the author/sponsor an expert in this area?
   B. Is it clear who sponsors the site and what the sponsor’s purpose is?
   C. Is this a recognized organization or individual?
   D. Is there information on how to contact the author or organization?
   E. Is there a list of references?

3. **Is the site relevant to your topic?**
   A. Does the website focus on your topic or is it a sub topic within the site?
   B. If your topic is in an area such as science, information changes rapidly. Whereas a topic such as ancient Egyptian art, can be older and still contain relevant information. News websites often include not only the date of the website, but the time the news item was posted.

4. **Is the information contained on the site accurate?**
   A. Can you verify the information on the page somewhere else?
   B. Is the spelling, grammar, etc. accurate?
   C. Did others in the this area review the content on the page?
   D. Are the web pages navigable? Do the links work?

5. **Is this the best information you can find on the topic?**
   A. Don’t forget to check the databases and print resources.
   B. Compare several websites on the topic, do they have similar information?
6. **Is the web page objective?**
   A. What is the goal of the page? Does it meet that goal?
   B. Is the site biased or does it present both sides of the topic?
   C. Is the information intended to persuade or inform?
   D. Does the site link only to similar points-of-view?

7. **What kind of topic coverage does the site have?**
   A. Is the web site under construction?
   B. Does the site provide comprehensive coverage of the topic?
   C. Is the site too basic? Is it too advanced?
   D. Was the topic well-researched?

8. **Does the site complement material that you already have?**
   A. Do other sources contain the same basic information?
   B. Do the articles conflict? Do they exaggerate? Do they distort the facts?
   C. Don’t make snap decisions about web sites. Way it against other websites, articles found in databases, and/or in print resources.

**You have found resources, now what?**
A. Print the web page. Don’t assume you will be able to find the web page at a later date. It will makes it easier to cite it correctly when you complete your bibliography or works cited page.
B. Remember to cite quotations and paraphrases using the format specified by your instructor (i.e. APA, MLA, Turabian, and so on). Plagiarism is a serious offense and can result in you failing the course, expulsion from school or even legal prosecution by the author.

Knowledge is power. If you verify web pages, you increase the quality of the information you use to write your papers. You will also be able to write objective papers based on quality information. Before using the Internet, always check the databases. If you are unsure if a source is valid or need additional help, ask a Reference Librarian for assistance.

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