



Evaluating Web Resources

Library *How to* Guide

<http://library.nlc.bc.ca>

Why should you evaluate webpages?

- ♦ Anyone can create a web page – there is no guarantee that the material is truthful, reliable, or worth your time.
- ♦ Since there is no group of experts assigned to monitor or correct information on the WWW, you are responsible for determining whether the information being provided is correct and meets your needs.

Evaluate critically. Use the **START Checklist** to evaluate web resources.

Scope Treatment Authority Relevance Timeliness

Scope:

- What is this website for?
 - Is it to provide you with educational information?
 - Is it to act as a “fan club” or for a hobby?
 - Is it for political reasons?
 - Is it to sell you something?
 - Is it for another reason?If the purpose is confusing or unclear, that is a good sign that you should look somewhere else.
- Are all aspects of the topic covered?
- Is the coverage in depth?
- Does the information add new or unique information about your topic?
- Are there visual aids that enhance the text?

Treatment:

- Is the information presented as fact or opinion?
- Is evidence provided?
- Are conclusions logical?
- Is the information free from bias? A site that is unbiased will try to give you a fair opinion or an objective opinion

Authority:

- Is it clear who wrote this information? (an individual, editor, organization?)
- What are the qualifications of the author or editor or organization that produced the site?
- Is there a link describing the goals of the author or organization?
- Does the author or organization provide an e-mail or a contact address/phone number or other contact information?
- How reliable is the source?

Reliable sources tend to be commercial, technical reports, well-recognized names of persons, companies, organizations and journals. These sites have web addresses (domains) which often, but not always end in:

 - .edu educational site
 - .com commercial business, personal web pages. This is the most common domain.
 - .gov government non-military sites
 - .mil military sites and agencies
 - .net networks, internet providers, organizations
 - .org non-profit organizations and others

Relevance:

- ❑ Does the information address your topic?
- ❑ Can the information be checked somewhere else to show that it is true?
- ❑ Is the information consistent with information from other sources?

Timeliness:

- ❑ Is the information sufficiently current for your purpose?
- ❑ Is the page dated? If so, when was the last update?
- ❑ How current are the links? Have some links expired or moved?
- ❑ If you cannot tell when the page was last updated, are there any other ways to show that the material is kept current?

Guidelines based on: Iannuzzi, Patricia, et al. *Teaching Information Literacy Skills*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999, p.145.

For further information, check out The Internet Detective at: <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective/>

*Not everything is on the Internet. If you are having a hard time finding what you need, you may need to look somewhere else for information such as books, magazines or newspapers. **Ask your librarian for assistance.***

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