



LIBRARY
1700 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130
215-751-8394
<http://library.ccp.edu>

Evaluating Internet Resources

Unlike most print resources such as journals and magazines that go through a filtering process (peer review, editing), the information on the World Wide Web and the Internet is mostly unfiltered. So using and citing information found on the Web depends on your scrutiny. The following checklist is meant as a guide for evaluating web sites.

Purpose

Audience

- Consider the intended audience of the page, based on its content, tone and style
- Does this mesh with your needs?

Consider the Source

- Web search engines often amass vast results, from memos to scholarly documents
- Many of the resulting items will be peripheral or useless for your research

Source

- Author/producer is identifiable
- Author/producer has expertise on the subject as indicated on a credentials page.
You may need to trace back in the URL (Internet address) to view a page in a higher directory with background information
- Sponsor/location of the site is appropriate to the material as shown in the URL

Examples:

.edu for educational or research material
.gov for government resources
.com for commercial products or commercially-sponsored sites

- ~NAME in URL may mean a personal home page with no official sanction
- Mail-to link is offered for submission of questions or comments

Content

Accuracy

- Don't take the information presented at face value
- Web sites are rarely refereed or reviewed, as are scholarly journals and books
- Look for:
 - point of view
 - evidence of bias
- Source of the information should be clearly stated, whether original or borrowed from elsewhere

Comprehensiveness

- Depth of information: determine if content covers a specific time period or aspect of the topic, or strives to be comprehensive
- Use additional print and electronic sources to complement the information provided

Currency

- Look to see if:
 - site has been updated recently, as reflected in the date on the page
 - material contained on the page is current

Links

- Links are relevant and appropriate
- Don't assume that the linked sites are the best available. Be sure to investigate additional sites on the topic

Style and Functionality

- Site is laid out clearly and logically with well organized subsections
- Writing style is appropriate for the intended audience
- Site is easy to navigate, including
 - clearly labeled "Back", "Home" and "Go To Top" icons/links
 - internal indexing links on lengthy pages
- Links to remote sites all work
- Search capability is offered if the site is extensive

EXERCISE: Rating a World Wide Web site

Using the following criteria **in any order**, give a numerical ranking to your Web site according to the scale.

1. Which individual, group, or organization sponsors this site? _____
(Individual +1, Group/Organization +2, Unknown -4)
2. Is the author/publisher a recognizable authority? What are their credentials, university degrees?
_____ (Yes +1, No 0, Unknown 0)
3. Does the author/publisher provide his/her e-mail address? Write it here: _____
(Yes +1, No 0)
4. Does the page cite a bibliography or provide references to confirm the accuracy of the information?
(Yes +3, No 0) How many citations are provided? _____
5. When was the site last updated? _____
(Last 2 months +2, Last 6 months +1, Older 0, No date of last revision -2)
6. Does the information contradict information from other commonly accepted sources?
(Yes -1, No 0)
7. Can you detect any evidence of bias from reading this page?
(Obvious bias -4, No 0)

RATING-----		RESULT
+7 and higher	A	Excellent page to use in writing your research paper.
+5 to +6	B	Well-written, but may be biased or out of date.
+3 to +4	C	Should be used with caution. Try to verify any questionable facts.
0 to +2	D	May be well-written, but highly suspect. Avoid.
1 to -4 or lower	F	Should not be used.

What rating was earned by your chosen Web site? _____