Evaluating Internet Resources

Unlike most print resources such as magazines, journals, and books that go through a filtering process (e.g. editing, peer review, library selection), information on the Internet is mostly unfiltered. While quality information can be found, many non-quality sites also exist. Use the following criteria to determine if an Internet resource is reliable and suitable for use in your research.

**Accuracy**
- What is the purpose of the document and why was it produced?
- If facts and figures are given, are they accurate?
- Are the sources for any factual information clearly listed?
- Can they be verified in another source? (another web site OR a print resource?)

*What it means:*
- Make sure the information is accurate and can be verified.

**Authority**
- Who wrote the page and can you contact him or her?
- Are the author’s qualifications or credentials listed?
- Is this person qualified to write this document?
- Check the domain of the document, what institution publishes it?

*What it means:*
- Look for the author’s credentials and contact information.
- Check the URL domain - .edu, .org, and .gov are preferred.

**Objectivity**
- What goals/objectives does this page meet?
- Is a particular point of view being presented?
- Is there a bias, either explicit or implied?
- Is advertising present on the site? If so, is it clearly differentiated from the information presented?

*What it means:*
- Look for background information such as “About Us,” “Who Am I,” “Philosophy,” etc.
- Be aware of the goals and/or aims of the site. The Web often functions as a virtual soapbox.
- Determine if the page is a mask for advertising.
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Currency
- When was the page produced?
- When was it updated?
- Are the links up-to-date?

What it means:
✓ Confirm that the page is current and updated regularly, and that the links are also up-to-date.

Completeness
- Is the subject adequately covered?
- Are the links (if any) evaluated and do they complement the page’s theme?
- Is the information presented cited correctly?

What it means:
✓ Make sure the page meets your research needs and has comprehensive coverage.

Resources consulted:
“Five criteria for evaluating Web pages”
Cornell University Library
www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/webcrit.html

“Six Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages”
CSU Fullerton – Pollak Library

“Evaluating Internet Resources: A checklist”
Infopeople
http://www.infopeople.org/resources/select.html

For further information:
“Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask”
UC Berkeley Library
www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html