



Evaluating Internet Sources

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How did you find the page?

- How you located the site can give you a start on your evaluation of the site's validity as an academic resource.
 - Was it found via a search conducted through a search engine? Unlike library databases, the accuracy and/or quality of information located via a search engine will vary greatly. *Look carefully!*
 - Was it recommended by a faculty member or another reliable source? Generally, an indicator of reliability.
 - Was it cited in a scholarly or credible source? Generally, an indicator of reliability.
 - Was it a link from a reputable site? Generally, an indicator of reliability.




What is the site's domain?

- Think of this as "decoding" the URL, or Internet address. The origination of the site can provide indications of the site's mission or purpose. The most common domains are:
 - **.org** :An advocacy web site, such as a not-for-profit organization.
 - **.com** : A business or commercial site.
 - **.net**:A site from a network organization or an Internet service provider.;
 - **.edu** :A site affiliated with a higher education institution.
 - **.gov**: A federal government site.
 - **.il.us** :A state government site, this may also include public schools and community colleges.
 - **.uk** (United Kingdom) : A site originating in another country (as indicated by the 2 letter code).
 - **~**:The tilde usually indicates a personal page.



What is the authority of the page?

- Look for information on the author of the site. On the Internet anyone can pose as an authority.
 - Is the author's name visible? Does the author have an affiliation with an organization or institution?
 - Does the author list his or her credentials? Are they relevant to the information presented?
 - Is there a mailing address or telephone number included, as well as an e-mail address?



Is the information accurate and objective?

- There are no standards or controls on the accuracy of information available via the Internet.
The Internet can be used by anyone as a sounding board for their thoughts and opinions.
 - How accurate is the information presented? Are sources of factual information or statistics cited? Is there a bibliography included?
 - Compare the page to related sources, electronic or print, for assistance in determining accuracy.
 - Does the page exhibit a particular point of view or bias?
 - Is the site objective? Is there a reason the site is presenting a particular point of view on a topic?
 - Does the page contain advertising? This may impact the content of the information included. Look carefully to see if there is a relationship between the advertising and the content, or whether the advertising is simply providing financial support for the page.



Is the page current?

- This is both an indicator of the timeliness of the information and whether or not the page is actively maintained.
 - Is the information provided current?
 - When was the page created?
 - Are dates included for the last update or modification of the page?
 - Are the links current and functional?




Does the page function well?

- The ease of use of a site and its ability to help you locate information you are looking for are examples of the site's functionality.
 - Is the site easy to navigate? Are options to return to the home page, tops of pages, etc., provided?
 - Is the site searchable?
 - Does the site include a site map or index?



References



University of Illinois. (2012). *Evaluating internet sources: Tips and tricks for evaluating web sites*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/webeval.html>