EVALUATING WEB RESOURCES
SHAKE LIBRARY RESOURCE GUIDE
VINCENNES UNIVERSITY
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Why Evaluate Information from the Web?

It is important when doing research to find accurate, reliable information. Print information goes through some evaluation process such as editing, fact checks, or peer evaluation before it gets published. The number of resources available on the Web is immense. Companies, organizations, educational institutions, government agencies, communities and individuals all serve as information providers for the Web community. When you select information from the Web, it is critically important that you evaluate the information very carefully due to the fact that there is no central authority to check the validity of the information. **Remember, anyone can place information on the Web**.

Authority, Authorship, or Sponsorship

- Can you tell who is responsible for the information on the page, such as an author, publisher, or organization?
- Does the author list his or her occupation, affiliation and credentials?
- Is the author qualified to write about the subject?
- What does the domain name/URL reveal about the source of the information? Sometimes you can ascertain who created the web site by looking at the address or URL. The end of the address is especially helpful since it indicates a type of organization or institution:

  - .aero - Aviation sites http://www.tshone.aero
  - .asia – Asian sites http://www.fuelsandlubes.asia/
  - .biz - Business sites http://www.marketing-magic.biz
  - .com - Commercial sites http://www.walmart.com
  - .coop - Cooperatives sites http://www.wfcmac.coop
  - .edu - Educational sites http://www.vinu.edu
  - .gov – U.S. government sites http://www.fbi.gov
  - .info - General use sites http://www.sdgfp.info
  - .int – International organizations http://www.iica.int
  - .in.us – State-supported institution in U.S. http://www.roanoke.lib.in.us/
  - .jobs – Employment sites http://www.walgreens.jobs
  - .mil – U.S. military sites http://www.navy.mil
  - .mobi – Mobile devices http://drapers.mobi
  - .museum - Museum sites http://amnh.museum/
  - .name - Individual or personal sites http://www.nancyanderson.name/
  - .net - General Internet address http://www.evansville.net
  - .org - Organization http://www.cancer.org
  - .pro - Professional sites http://www.sewell.cpa.pro
  - .tel - Publishing of contact data http://indiana.state-sales.wth.tel/
  - .travel – Travel sites http://www.vegashotels.travel

Accuracy

- Are sources for information cited?
- Can you verify any of the information in traditional print sources?
- Has the Web page gone through an editorial or peer reviewed process?
- Is it clear where the information came from?
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, typographical or other errors?

Currency

- Is the information current?
- Can you tell when the Web site was created or last updated?
- Does the page contain numerous expired links?

Level of Coverage

- Who is the intended audience?
- Are all aspects of the subject covered?
- Is the subject covered in an in-depth manner?
- Is the subject covered at the appropriate level for your needs?

Point of View

- Is the information on the page presented objectively?
- Are all sides of an issue presented?
- Are opinions stated as facts?
- Is the author or organization responsible for the Web site trying to advance a certain agenda or sway opinion?
- Is the information intended to inform, explain, teach, sell (advertising, marketing, etc.), persuade, entertain, or enlighten?
- Does the language or tone seem biased?

Other Resources on Evaluating Web Sites

Evaluate Web Pages
http://www3.widener.edu/Academics/Libraries/Wolfgram_Memorial_Library/Evaluate_Web_Pages/659/

Evaluating Information from the World Wide Web
http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/library/webevalintro.htm

Evaluating Web Sites
http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=1482

Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages
http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/webcrit.html

net.TUTOR: Evaluating Web Sites
http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/