

Evaluation of a Web Site

What to look for when evaluating a web site

Purpose – Why was the page created?

- Information – laws, rules, news, etc.
- Entertainment – games, magazines, gossip, celebrities, etc.
- Advertise/sell a product
- Influence beliefs/views – legal, moral, political issues
- Personal enjoyment – pages created by individuals not affiliated with any group or organization.

Sponsor/Owner

- Government agency (.gov)
- Educational institution (.edu)
- Business/company (.com)
- Association (.org)
- News bureau (.com)
- Personal – Anyone can put up a website for any purpose so use these sites with caution.

Authority/Author

- Who is responsible for the page? Read the “About Us” section.
- Is the author an expert in the field?
 - Are the author’s credentials posted? Are they accurate and verifiable?
 - What else has the author written?
 - Is contact information provided?
- Is there a review process or selection policy for the information on the site?

Content

- Is the topic covered comprehensively, partially, or is it an overview?
- Is the content reasonable? Does it make unbelievable claims? It is helpful to know a bit about your subject. Compare several quality sites for consistency.
- Are original sources linked or cited?
- Where does the money come from to support the site?
- Can you tell the advertisements from the health information? Are the ads clearly labeled?

Bias

- Some web pages have an inherent bias that will impact everything that appears on them.
- Is the author or sponsor:
 - Left/liberal? Right/conservative? Center?
 - A political action group or association (PAC)?

Business?

Issue-oriented?

Page organization

- Is the page organized and focused?
- Is it well designed?
- Is the text well written?
- Are the links relevant and appropriate? Do the links work?
- Are the graphics clear in intent, relevant and professional looking?
- Do the graphics add to or enhance the content?

Currency

- When was the web page produced/revised?
- How up-to-date are the links?

Usefulness

- Is the website relevant to the research topic? Does it:
Support an argument? Refute an argument?
Provide examples?
Provide “wrong” information that can be readily and productively
challenged?
Do the links work and have content?

Audience

- To what type of reader is the web page directed?
- Is it age appropriate for your needs?
- Is the page for
General readers?
Students (elementary, middle school, high school, college)?
Specialists or professionals?
Researchers or scholars?

Source: Colorado State University Library, URL: <http://lib.colostate.edu/howto/evalweb2.html>

Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial from the National Library of Medicine, URL:
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/webeval/webeval.html>