



Lovejoy Library

Internet Evaluation Guidelines

Got It Off the Net?

A checklist for evaluating the quality of web resources...

"Author"ity

Verify the professional credentials by identifying the author(s), sponsor(s), and publisher(s) of web content. This information may require careful detection to locate, but is often found at the bottom of most web pages.

Ask yourself:

- Who is the website's content author or authors?
→ *Is it a person, group, agency, organization?*
- Who created the site?
- What are the professional credentials?
→ *Are the credentials verifiable?*
- What entity sponsors/publishes the site?
→ *Are they reliable?*
- What is the domain type?
→ *Does the .com satisfy your research needs?*
- Who is the domain sponsor?
→ *Are there affiliates that influence content?*

Accuracy

Target reputable websites known for providing factual material. Scan the website for validity and use of citations.

Ask yourself:

- Are the assertions and "facts" verifiable?
→ *Are citations provided?*
- Is there supporting evidence indicating that the content is well-researched?
- Does a reputable web site rating service list the site (Librarian's Index to the Internet, Info MINE, Britannica Online, etc.)?

Currency

Ensure that the information provided is up-to-date.

Ask yourself:

- When was the page's content last updated?
→ *Is the date displayed in reference to the web site, or the actual article / page of interest?*
- Are the links within the page still current?



Domain Types

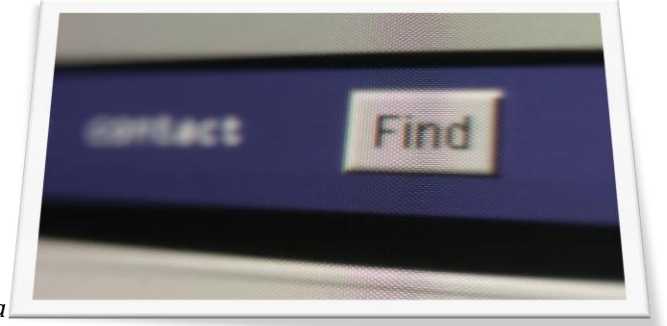
- **.com** - commercial sites designed for selling or entertainment, and may include many personal sites (Ex: www.aol.com).
- **.edu** - educational, institutional /organizational, or college student sites primarily provide useful information. (Ex: www.siu.edu)
- **.gov** - sites designed for government entities; provides information that is usually reliable (Ex: www.usa.gov)
- **.mil** - sites for a military body (Ex: www.nic.mil)
- **.net** - sites for Internet service provider (ISP), or as alternatives to .com domain types (Ex: www.isp.net)
- **.org** - organizational sites for non-profit and profit-seeking entities; provides useful information, but may have biases (Ex: www.wikipedia.org)

Objectivity

Consider in whose best interest the content is presented.

Ask yourself:

- Are there any indications that show if the purpose of the content is to inform, entertain, or persuade?
- Is factual information being presented without bias?
 - *Do the site creators show a particular bias in their presentation of information and interpretations?*
- What types of sites link to the web site?
 - *What comes up when you enter the URL into a search engine?*

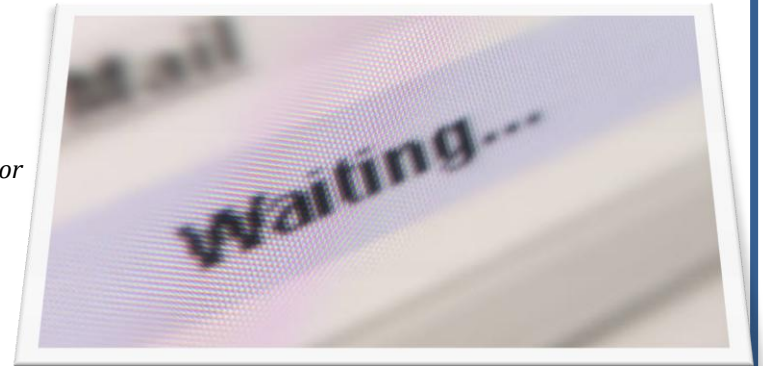


Coverage & Comparability

Consider depth and breadth of topic coverage.

Ask yourself:

- What topics does the website cover?
- How in-depth is the coverage of topics?
 - *Is the site intended to be comprehensive or selective?*
- How does the site compare to related resources available elsewhere online or in print?



Maintenance & Design

Ensure that the web site is functional and reliable.

Ask yourself:

- Is the site easy to navigate?
- Is the site well organized with an index available?
- Is there trouble connecting to the site, page, or links?

INDICATORS OF SCHOLARSHIP	INDICATORS OF PROPAGANDA
Describes limits of research of data.	Claims of certainty, i.e. one "right" way of thinking
Presents accurate descriptions of alternate viewpoints.	Relies on personal attacks and ridicule.
Encourages debate, discussion, and criticism.	Uses inflammatory language. Emotional appeals.
Looks for counter-examples.	Appeals to popular prejudices.
Admits own ignorance.	Transforms words and statistics to suit purpose.

For additional assistance contact Lydia Jackson, Instruction Librarian (ljacks@siue.edu or 618-650-2604).

