How to Evaluate Web Sites for Quality

Since web sites vary widely in terms of credibility, timeliness, and overall quality, it is important to closely evaluate the sources you may use in your research. Below are some basic questions to ask when evaluating the content of a Web site.

Authorship

- Is the author of the site easily identified?
- Is the Web address affiliated with an educational institution (.edu), a government agency (.gov), a non-profit entity (.org), an Internet Service Provider or ISP (.net), or a for-profit corporation (.com)?
- Has the author written anything else on the topic?
- What experience, credentials or education does the author have in the subject area?

Accuracy

- Are there any errors in the information?
- Did someone verify or review the information?
- Is the material vague and can the information be easily misunderstood or misapplied?
- How does the information compare to other sources on the same subject matter?
- Does the item include citations or a bibliography of sources used?

Purpose

- Why was the information posted on the Web?
- Is the information biased or objective?
- Is the information propaganda in nature?
- Is the site trying to sell something?
- Is the site made for entertainment purposes?

Currency

- When was the page created?
- When was the page last updated?
- Are the sources used current?
- Are the links outdated?
- Are the latest ideas on the subject matter discussed?

Design

- Is the page easy to read?
- Is the material well organized?

Intended Audience

- Who is the information intended for?
- Is the information too broad or too narrow for the user?
- Does the site use technical language that would be hard to understand?