

## **Evaluating Web Sites: Selecting the Best Sources for Academic Assignments**

Checklist of Questions to Consider When Examining Web Sites

### **Authorship/Source**

- Who is the author?
- What are the author's credentials?
- Who sponsors the site?
- What type of organization is it?
- Is there a statement of intent or mission?
- Is contact information provided?

### **Currency and Site Maintenance**

- When was the web page created?
- When was it last modified?
- Is there evidence that the content has been recently updated?
- Are the sites linked reliable?

### **Point of View**

- What is the site or page's purpose?
- What is the bias: stated, implied, or evident from your reading?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What type of language is used in the text?
- Is there advertising?

### **Accuracy**

- Are there bibliographic citations, links to other sites, or other means for you to verify information on the site?
- Are errors evident in the content (statements you know to be untrue) or form (misspellings, etc.)?

### **Design and Structure**

- What type of page and site is this: a mailing list post, a published article, a company's promotional site, a personal page, or an organization's informational site?
- Is it easy to navigate?
- Do graphics and software applications on the site serve a useful purpose?
- Does the site require a password or fee?

### **Relative Value**

- What is the value of the site's information relative to other sources (print as well as web-based)?
- Does the site contribute to original knowledge or a unique perspective?
- Is this site more useful than others for your particular need?

## **Hallmarks of Scholarship and Some Caveats for Academic Users of the World Wide Web**

Authors take responsibility for their own work and provide contact information for readers to submit questions or comments to them on that work.

*Beware of web sites with no authorship statement and no means of contacting the site creators*

Authors are familiar with the work of other individuals and organizations related to their own work. They give credit to others for ideas they use and provide citations or other links to the work of others for readers to use to pursue research connections.

*Beware of web sites with statements presented as fact but with no attributions for the sources of those facts.*

Authors are aware of the limits both of their own knowledge and of current knowledge within their discipline, and they state these limits or uncertainties within the presentation of their work.

*Beware of web sites making claims of absolute truth.*

Authors are aware of arguments that contradict their own position, and they articulate these arguments and provide citations or other links to sources presenting them.

*Beware of web sites that do not acknowledge opposing views.*

Authors include disclosure of the methods used to generate any statistical or other data used in their work.

*Beware of web sites presenting quantitative or other types of data but giving no information on methodology or no citation to the source of those data.*

Authors state their credentials, label their opinions as opinion, and disclose any sponsors of their work.

*Beware of web sites that do not provide a means of finding out something about the author's background and/or the site sponsor's mission.*

Authors strive to communicate effectively with their audience and organize their presentation in a manner logically, linguistically, and graphically comprehensible to members of that audience.

*Beware of web sites with hard-to-follow arguments, poor writing, or distracting or irrelevant graphic or software application features.*