

Critically Evaluating Web Resources

Anyone can mount a web page, given the appropriate software, hardware, and communications links. Unlike the printed world there are no editorial boards or editors of information published on the Internet to assure quality. If one is to use material found on the Internet one must learn to critically evaluate the information.

The following is a list of criteria to consider to help you determine the quality of Internet resources. *When evaluating sites it is important to separate content from presentation.* The site's design and presentation are issues if they create confusion for users or inhibit finding or using data.

Scope

- Is the purpose of the site clearly defined?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information provided relevant to your research topic?
- Does the information meet your specific need?
- Is there a print equivalent to the site? If so, is the same information covered?

Authority

- Do you know who mounted the site?
- Is the author's name clearly visible?
- What are the credentials of the author?
- Is there information on how to contact the author?
- Is the site produced by a reputable organization?

Accuracy

- Are good grammar, spelling, and composition rules followed?
- How accurate is the information?
- Is the information verifiable?
- Are sources cited?
- Are additional sources of information provided?
- Does the tone or style of writing lead you to suspect the accuracy?

Objectivity

- Are various viewpoints presented?
- Is the information overly biased or slanted?
- Does the page contain advertising?
- Is the objectivity portrayed consistent with the purpose of the site?

Currency

- What is the date of the information?
- When was the page last updated?
- Are links current and reliable?

- Do the charts and/or graphs have dates?

Design/Presentation

- Is the information presented in a logical manner?
- Is the text readable? Does color or a background inhibit use?
- Is navigating the site intuitive?
- Do the graphics serve a purpose? Do they help communicate the message?
- Is there an appropriate use of multimedia?
- If frames are used, do you know where information is coming from?
- Is there a text-only option?
- Is the site useful in a non-graphical browser environment?

Other Sources to Consult

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