

Checklist for Evaluating Web Resources

Is the Web a good research tool? This question is dependent on the researcher's objective. As in traditional print resources one must use a method of critical analysis to determine its value. Here is a checklist for evaluating web resources to help in that determination.

Authority:

- ✓ Is the information reliable?
- ✓ Check the author's credentials and affiliation. Is the author an expert in the field?
- ✓ Does the resource have a reputable organization or expert behind it?
- ✓ Are the sources of information stated? Can you verify the information?
- ✓ Can the author be contacted for clarification?
- ✓ Check for organizational or author biases.

Scope:

- ✓ Is the material at this site useful, unique, accurate or is it derivative, repetitious, or doubtful?
- ✓ Is the information available in other formats?
- ✓ Is the purpose of the resource clearly stated? Does it fulfill its purpose?
- ✓ What items are included in the resource? What subject area, time period, formats or types of material are covered?
- ✓ Is the information factual or opinion?
- ✓ Does the site contain original information or simply links?
- ✓ How frequently is the resource updated?
- ✓ Does the site have clear and obvious pointers to new content?

Format and Presentation:

- ✓ Is the information easy to get to? How many links does it take to get to something useful?
- ✓ What is the quality of the graphical images? Do these images enhance the resource or distract from the content?
- ✓ Is the target audience or intended users clearly indicated?
- ✓ Is the arrangement of links uncluttered?
- ✓ Does the site have its own search engine?
- ✓ Is the site easily browsable or searchable?

Cost and Accessibility:

- ✓ Is the site available on a consistent basis?
- ✓ Is response time fast?
- ✓ Does the site have a text-based alternative?
- ✓ How many links lead to a dead-end?
- ✓ Is this a fee-based site? Can non-members still have access to part of the site?
- ✓ Must you register a name and password before using the site?

Other Tips:

- ✓ Check the header and footer information to determine the author and source.
- ✓ In the URL, a tilde ~ usually indicated a personal web directory rather than being part of the organization's official web site.
- ✓ In order to verify an author's credentials, you may need to consult some printed sources such as *Who's Who in America* or the *Biography Index*.
- ✓ Check and compare the web site to others which are both similar and different.

For more information on how to evaluate:

This site has an excellent bibliography of other internet and print resources on evaluating web resources. It is updated by a librarian, Nicole J. Auer, at Virginia Tech on a regular basis.

- <http://www.lib.vt.edu/instruct/evaluate/>

Citing Internet Resources:

Here is a bibliography of web sites you can use to help with citing Internet resources:

- <http://www.wtamu.edu/library/webguides/citingweb.shtml>



Prepared by University of Southern Maine Libraries

<http://usm.maine.edu/library/checklist-evaluating-web-resources>