

EVALUATING INTERNET RESOURCES

What is the Purpose?

Audience

- Consider the intended audience of the page, based on its content, tone and style
- Does this mesh with your needs?

Consider the Source

- Web search engines often amass vast results, from memos to scholarly documents
- Many of the resulting items will be peripheral or useless for your research

Who is the Source?

- Is the author/producer of the web page identifiable?
- Does the author/producer have expertise on the subject as indicated on a credentials page? You may need to trace back in the URL (Internet address) to view a page in a higher directory with background information
- Is the sponsor/location of the site appropriate to the material as shown in the URL?

Examples:

- **.edu** for educational or research material
- **.gov** for government resources
- **.com** for commercial products or commercially-sponsored sites
- ~NAME in URL may mean a personal home page with no official sanction

What is the Nature of the Content?

Accuracy

- Don't take the information presented at face value
- Web sites are rarely refereed or reviewed, as are scholarly journals and books, so look for:
 - point of view
 - evidence of bias
- Source of the information should be clearly stated, whether original or borrowed from elsewhere

Comprehensiveness

- Depth of information: determine if content covers a specific time period or aspect of the topic, or strives to be comprehensive
- Use additional print and electronic sources to complement the information provided

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Currency

- Look to see if:
 - Site has been updated recently, as reflected in the date on the page
 - Material contained on the page is current

Links

- Links are relevant and appropriate
- Don't assume that the linked sites are the best available. Be sure to investigate additional sites on the topic

Style and Functionality

- Site is laid out clearly and logically with well organized subsections
- Writing style is appropriate for the intended audience
- Site is easy to navigate, including:
 - Clearly labeled **Back, Home, Go To Top** icons/links
 - Internal indexing links on lengthy pages
- Links to remote sites all work
- Search capability is offered if the site is extensive

Adapted from:

<http://library.albany.edu/internet/evaluate.html>

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