Guidelines for Evaluating Websites

▶ Who is the author or institution?

- If the author is a person, does the resource give biographical information about him or her, including any of the following: educational and other credentials, position, institutional affiliation, and street address? (Sometimes an e-mail address is not enough.)
- If the author is an institution, is there information provided about it, including the purpose and history of the institution, in addition to a street address?
- Have you seen the author's or institution's name cited in other sources or bibliographies?
- The URL can give clues to the authority of a source. A tilde ~ in the URL usually indicates that it is a personal page rather than part of an institutional Web site. Also, make a mental note of the domain section of the URL, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.edu</td>
<td>educational (anything from serious research to zany student pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.gov</td>
<td>governmental (usually dependable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.com</td>
<td>commercial (may be trying to sell a product)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.net</td>
<td>network (may provide services to commercial or individual customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.org</td>
<td>organization (non-profit institutions; may be biased)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the page is part of a larger institution's Web site, does the institution appear to filter the information that appears at its site? Is the information provided put through some screening process before it is put on the Web?

▶ How current is the information?

- Is there a date on the Web page that indicates when the page was placed on the Web?
- Is it clear when the page was last updated?
- Is some of the information obviously out-of-date?
- Does the page creator mention how frequently the material is updated?

▶ Who is the audience?

- Is the Web page intended for the general public, scholars, practitioners, children, etc.? Is this clearly stated?
- Does the Web page meet the needs of its stated audience?

▶ Is the content accurate and objective?

- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, or institutional biases?
- Is the content intended to be a brief overview of the information or an in-depth analysis?
- If the information is opinion is this clearly stated?
- If there is information copied from other sources is this acknowledged? Are there footnotes if necessary?

▶ What is the purpose of the information?

- Is the purpose of the information to inform, explain, persuade, market a product, or advocate a cause?
- Is the purpose clearly stated?
- Does the resource fulfill the stated purpose?

Adapted from http://www.webliminal.com/search/search-web12.html#guidelines
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