Criteria for Evaluating Information on the Web

Purpose

- Is it a scholarly site or a popular site?
- Does the site contain advertising?
- What type of domain does it have? (.com; .org; .net; .edu; .gov; other) What might this tell you about the Web site?

Intended Audience

- Who is the site intended for?
- What type of audience do you think the author is trying to reach?

Authority / Credibility

- Can the author or creators of the site be identified? Who is responsible for the content?
- Are any qualifications or credentials of the author given?
- Is contact information for the author provided?
- Is the sponsor agency’s mission or background given?

Currency / Timeliness

- When was the site created?
- Have there been any updates or revisions?
- Does the site include any dead links?

Accuracy / Reliability

- Does the information on the site appear to be well researched?
- Can information be verified elsewhere?
- Are references to sources of information provided?
- Are sources for factual or statistical information documented?
Are there links to other sites? Do these sites appear to be reliable sources of information?
Are there misspellings, grammatical errors, or other inaccuracies?
How does the information compare to print information on the topic?

Objectivity / Bias

Are the goals of the author clearly stated?
Does the site present many opinions or only one?
Is there any identifiable bias in the information provided?
Is the site sponsored by a company or organization? If so, what is the purpose of the company / organization?
Is the site intended to sell something?
Does the site reflect the agenda of a specific group?
Are there advertisements on the site? If so, are they clearly set apart from the informational content?

Structure / Navigation

Is the organization of the site clear and logical?
Is it easy to navigate between parts of the site?
Is there a link to the main (home) page of the site on secondary pages?
Is there a table of contents or index for the site?
Is the site searchable?
Do graphics on the site add or detract from the page?

Conclusion

Based on the information gathered in this checklist, would this site be a good source of information for your research assignment?

Adapted from Teaching Information Literacy: 35 Practical, Standards-Based Exercises for College Students by Joanna M. Burkhardt, Mary C. MacDonald, and Andrée J. Rathemacher, 2003. Fall 2005