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Information Literacy Guides**

EVALUATING WEB SITES--A CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Authority and Authorship

- Is there a person or organization named in the Web site who has responsibility for the material presented? If so, can you find out the author's background and qualifications? Is the author affiliated with an educational institution (domain: edu)?

2. Accuracy

- Are there spelling, grammar or punctuation errors on the Web page?
- Are the sources of information specified on the Web page--for example, studies or original research upon which the Web page is based?

3. Objectivity

- Is the information biased to a certain point of view?
- Are all points of view represented fairly?

4. Currency

- Is there a publication date for the Web page, or a date when it was last updated?

5. Coverage

- Is the coverage extensive and in-depth, or brief and superficial?

6. Purpose

- For whom is the site intended? What is it trying to do?

To help you answer this question, consider the domain that the Web site belongs to:

.edu = educational institution = purpose to educate and inform
.org = non-profit organization = purpose to further the goals of the organization
.gov = an official government site = purpose to report to those governed
.com = a commercial business site = purpose to sell a product

In the book *Web Wisdom: How to Evaluate and Create Information Quality on the Web*, by Janet E. Alexander and Marsha Ann Tate, the authors have found that most Web sites can be subsumed under the following categories, each with a distinct overriding purpose.

- Informational -- these Web sites provide factual information for scholars or for the public (usually considered as "consumers")
- Advocacy -- these Web sites are aimed at a particular social or political agenda, and are intended to incite you to join the action, or to take sides of an issue.

- Business -- these Web sites further the interests of a business corporation, usually, ultimately, by selling you a product.
- News -- these Web sites provide current information on local, regional, national, or international events. The news provider may be objective, or biased by a social/political agenda (see also Advocacy).
- Personal -- these Web sites are created by an individual. They are a vehicle for a person's talents and interests. They may be affiliated with an educational institution or a business corporation. They may serve to sell a product or service provided by the individual (see also Business). They should not be assumed to be scholarly or useful for academic research on a topic.
- Entertainment -- these Web sites cover sports, hobbies, recreations, humor, games, music, films and celebrities (including fan clubs). They are often business web pages (domain: .com) and they are interested in selling you a product or carrying heavy advertising.

If you need help evaluating a Web site for a research project, please ask a librarian.