

Evaluating Information on the Web

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When evaluating a website, ask yourself:

Audience?

Determine the audience and whether the level of presentation is appropriate for your needs.

Source?

The site creator/author should be identified.

Is the author known? Can he be contacted? What are his credentials? Who sponsors the Website?

The sponsor or location of the site should be appropriate to the content as indicated by the top level of the domain in the URL (address). Examples include:

Domain name

Purpose

.biz

for business materials (operational since 2001)

.edu

for educational or research materials

.gov

for government resources (e.g., firstgov.gov)

.com

for commercial products or commercially sponsored sites. Reliable resources may be found in the .com domain, as companies often sponsor value-added information to

advertise themselves (“infomercials”).

.org

organizations (e.g., menc.org—The National Association for Music Education)

.net

networks (e.g., classical.net)

.info

for all uses (operational since 2001)

Content?

Is this content the best available on the topic? What is the purpose of publication?

Does the material appear biased (whether stated or hidden)? … or is it fairly objective?

Look for an agenda. The source of the information should be stated at the site, whether original or borrowed from elsewhere. Is the content comprehensive? Determine the depth of information. The content may cover only a specific time period or aspect of the topic, or it may strive to be comprehensive.

Reliability?

How does the material compare to related resources?

Currency?

How current does the information appear to be? How often is the Website updated? Keep in mind that the date may have various meanings: date first created, date placed on the Web, or the date last revised. Be sure to note any broken links.