

Dakota College at Bottineau Library

Evaluating Web Resources

When you are searching the Web for information, keep in mind that you will need to evaluate every Website you come across. This is an important step in the research process, don't accept Websites at face value!

Because it is so easy to use a search engine, and because most searches produce numerous hits, people often have the false impression that Web research is faster and easier than research using Library tools. They are mistaken. The Web can be a useful tool, but evaluating information gleaned from the Web can take more time and effort than you might expect.

Remember:

- Only you can determine how relevant a site is to your research. Search engines, directories, and other Web tools may offer "relevancy," but few of them rank the quality, accuracy, and authority of the site.
- Be selective about the information you gather.
- When you find a site that appears promising, be sure to use the criteria listed below. These criteria are similar to those you would use to evaluate a print source.

Evaluation Criteria	
When you are evaluating a Web page or a Website, ask yourself the following questions:	
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the author (i.e. the person, group, agency, or organization responsible for the site or page's content) named?• Are the author's credentials listed? Can you verify them?• Is the author affiliated with a recognizable group or organization?• Is contact information provided for the author (email, mailing address, phone number)?• Who sponsors the site?<ul style="list-style-type: none">.com (commercial firm).edu (educational institution).gov (U.S. Government agency).mil (U.S. Military).net (often an internet service provider (ISP))• Does the author identify the sources of her/his information? Are there references?

<p style="text-align: center;">Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the author indicate why s/he created the site? • Is the author objective? Does s/he have an identifiable bias? • What is the intended audience for the site? • Is the site instructional, promotional, commercial, informational, intended for entertainment, --? • Does the site contain advertising? Is the advertising distinct from the content of the site, or is it an integral part of the site? • Does the author provide links to external sites, and if so, what are they? • What types of sites link to this site? To check, go to Google or another search engine and type "link:" and paste the url address.
<p style="text-align: center;">Accuracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information reliable and error free? Can you verify this information using other sources? • Is the site edited? Are there fact checkers? • Do any reputable Website rating services (<u>The Scout Report</u>, <u>Librarians' Index to the Internet</u>, <u>Infomine</u>, <u>Britannica Online</u>) list this site?
<p style="text-align: center;">Currency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the site first created? • When was the site or page last updated? • Does the author or editor indicate which information has been most recently added?
<p style="text-align: center;">Maintenance & Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all of the links work? • Are there typographical errors, grammatical errors, or coding errors? • Did you have trouble connecting to the site or to specific pages? • IS the site well-organized and easy to navigate? • Is there a site index?

If you have any questions about a particular site, please ask your professor or ask a librarian; we will be happy to help you.