

Evaluating Websites

With billions of sources on the Internet, it is even more important for a researcher to determine which sources are **credible and reliable**. The same methods for evaluating PRINT resources should be used for evaluating websites. But because of the unique nature of the Web (meaning anyone can post anything on the web), the researcher can also use unique criteria for analyzing website content.

1. *Authorship*

Is there an author for this website? Is this a name you recognize as an authority in the field? Do they have academic or professional credentials?

TO FIND OUT: Sources that do not have biographical information or links to the author's biography are questionable sources. Checking the URL of the site can tell you which company, university or other organization is publishing the information.

2. *Accuracy*

Are there links to other sites? Are the linked sites credible?

TO FIND OUT: Unlike print resources, websites rarely have editors or fact-checkers. There are no standards to ensure accuracy of websites. You must critically analyze facts and compare with other sources.

3. *Objectivity*

Does this page show bias in its titles or text? Is there a minimum of advertising? What sponsors are supporting this page? Is the page layout designed to sway your opinion?

TO FIND OUT: Look at the images and sponsors on the page to determine if they are meant to convince you of something. Also, it is important to determine the mission and purpose of the organization publishing the information which can often be found as a link off the home page (although there are no standards for this).

4. *Currency*

When was this page created? Is the information current? When it was last updated? How current are the links?

TO FIND OUT: If links have expired or moved, it is a good clue that the page has not been recently updated. In web sources, dates are not always provided. When they are, you must determine if it is the date the piece was written, the date the piece was uploaded, or the date the piece was last edited.

5. *Review Process*

Was there a review process at all? Was it critically reviewed after it was posted on the website? Are there references to this source by other authors?

TO FIND OUT: Some sites volunteer this information while other sites, such as government or academic sites, have an internal review process for evaluating their own work. Be wary of personal homepages, artistic expression and other informal works on the web.

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