

# 6 CRITERIA FOR WEBSITES

These six criteria deal with the content of Web sites rather than the graphics or site design. Apply these criteria when you research on the internet.

## 1. AUTHORITY

Authority reveals that the person, institution or agency responsible for a site has the qualifications and knowledge to do so. Evaluating a web site for authority:

- Authorship: It should be clear who developed the site.
- **Contact information** should be clearly provided: e-mail address, snail mail address, phone number, and fax number.
- Credentials: the author should state qualifications, credentials, or personal background that gives them authority to present information.
- Check to see if the site supported by an organization or a commercial body

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the information presented in the site should be clear. Some sites are meant to inform, persuade, state an opinion, entertain, or parody something or someone. Evaluating a web site for purpose:

- Does the content support the purpose of the site?
- Is the information geared to a specific audience (students, scholars, general reader)?
- Is the site organized and focused?
- Are the outside links appropriate for the site?
- Does the site evaluate the links?
- Check the domain of the site. The URL may indicate its purpose.

## 3. COVERAGE

It is difficult to assess the extent of coverage since depth in a site, through the use of links, can be infinite. One author may claim comprehensive coverage of a topic while another may cover just one aspect of a topic. Evaluating a web site for coverage:

- Does the site claim to be selective or comprehensive?
- Are the topics explored in depth?
- Compare the value of the site's information compared to other similar sites.
- Do the links go to outside sites rather than its own?
- Does the site provide information with no relevant outside links?

#### **4. CURRENCY**

Currency of the site refers to: 1) how current the information presented is, and 2) how often the site is updated or maintained. It is important to know when a site was created, when it was last updated, and if all of the links are current. Evaluating a web site for currency involves finding the date information was:

- first written
- placed on the web
- last revised

Then ask if:

- Links are up-to-date
- Links provided should be reliable. Dead links or references to sites that have moved are not useful.
- Information provided so trend related that its usefulness is limited to a certain time period?
- the site been under construction for some time?

#### **5. OBJECTIVITY**

Objectivity of the site should be clear. Beware of sites that contain bias or do not admit its bias freely. Objective sites present information with a minimum of bias. Evaluating a web site for objectivity:

- Is the information presented with a particular bias?
- Does the information try to sway the audience?
- Does site advertising conflict with the content?
- Is the site trying to explain, inform, persuade, or sell something?

#### **6. ACCURACY**

There are few standards to verify the accuracy of information on the web. It is the responsibility of the reader to assess the information presented. Evaluating a web site for accuracy:

- Reliability: Is the author affiliated with a known, respectable institution?
- References: do statistics and other factual information receive proper references as to their origin?
- Does the reading you have already done on the subject make the information seem accurate?
- Is the information comparable to other sites on the same topic?
- Does the text follow basic rules of grammar, spelling and composition?
- Is a bibliography or reference list included?

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