

Evaluating Web Pages & Other Resources

Criteria	Questions to Ask	Web Page Issues	Traditional Resources Issues
Authority: Extent to which material is the creation of a person or organization that is recognized as having definite knowledge in a given subject area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the author of the site/resource? What are the author's qualifications? Who is the sponsor/publisher of the site is and how did you discover the sponsor? How did you determine the sponsor/publisher was reputable (or not)? Is there contact information for the author or sponsor, like a phone number or street address? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone can publish on the web No guarantee the author's name or qualifications will be given -- or that the author is even qualified No guarantee the sponsor/publisher is reputable, accurate or reliable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishers' earn a reputation for the quality of the books they publish, whether good or bad Content usually goes through an editorial process Information about editors and authors often provided
Accuracy: Extent to which information provided is reliable and error-free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the sources for any factual information cited? Are there grammatical, spelling and other typographical errors? How does the information provided compare to what you already know about the topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone can publish on the web Rarely use editors or fact checkers No standards exist to ensure accuracy of information on the web 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often use editors, peer-reviewers and fact checkers to monitor accuracy Usually cite sources for factual information
Objectivity: Extent to which material expresses facts without distortion by personal feelings or biases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the purpose of the site/book? To inform? Persuade? Advocate? Sell? Parody? Is the point of view of the author/sponsor evident? Are the statements, arguments or conclusions made well supported? Is the material free of advertising? Does the sponsor, publisher and/or advertiser influence the content of the material? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently the goals of the sponsors, publishers and/or authors are not stated Often web pages serve as "virtual soapboxes" and display author or sponsor biases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intent of the publisher or author providing the information a clue to potential biases

<p>Currency: Extent to which materials are up-to-date</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there dates on the page to indicate when the material was first written? • Are there dates on the page to indicate when the material was last revised? • How old is the material? • Are there any other indications that the material is kept current? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication and/or revision dates are not always provided • If a date is provided, it is often open to interpretation • "Link rot" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication and copyright dates usually provided • Dates for specific content (e.g. statistics) usually included
<p>Coverage: Range of topics included in a work and the depth to which those topics are addressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What topics are covered? • How in-depth is the material? • Who is the intended audience for the material? • What new information on your topic did this page give you? • Has anything significant been omitted? • What value does this page offer that is not found elsewhere? • What is its intrinsic value? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently difficult to determine the extent of coverage • Introduction, preface or overview rarely provided • Challenging to browse or "thumb through" web pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preface or introduction usually discuss the scope and coverage of a book • Table of contents or index provide clues about coverage • Easy to scan to ascertain coverage

Other criteria to consider:

- Have people you respect recommended the web site or book or other resources as a good source of information?
- How true do you think the information is?
- What other web pages link to the page? What books or articles have cited the material?
- Is the information provided important? Why is the information important?

Soooooo, for web pages:

- **Authority:** If the author and institution that published the page are reputable and the site provides a way of contacting him/her and...
- **Accuracy:** If your page does not have any typographical errors and includes some way to verify the information it contains, like a citation, and....
- **Objectivity:** If your page seems to present information with a minimum of bias, the statements made are supported and it is clear what the purpose of the page is, and....
- **Currency:** If your page contains current information and is updated and has little or no "link rot" and....
- **Coverage:** If your page discusses your topic in a level of detail that is helpful to you and does not omit significant information, then....

You just may have a good quality web page!