Guidelines for Evaluating Web Sites

“Author”ity
“Who has created the site?”
“What are their professional credentials?”
“Who or what is the agency that sponsors or publishes the site? Are they reliable?”
“What is the domain name of the site?”
.gov sites are government sites and should be reliable
.org sites are organizational sites which may provide good information, but may also be biased
.edu sites are educational sites which may provide good information, but may also be college student sites
.com sites are commercial sites that may provide good information, but must be evaluated very thoroughly as many are designed for selling or entertainment, and many may be personal web sites

Accuracy
“Is the material factual, to the best of your knowledge?”
“Does the information appear to be valid and well-researched or is it unsupported by evidence?”
“Are citations provided so that assertions and ‘facts’ that are presented can be verified?”

Objectivity
“Is the purpose of the page to inform, explain, or persuade?”
“Is the site designed to present factual information in an unbiased manner or do the creators of the site have a particular bias that is likely to color the information and interpretations?”
“Which of the following indicators of objectivity does the site contain?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators of Scholarship</th>
<th>Indicators of Propaganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describes limits of research or data.</td>
<td>Excessive claims of certainty, i.e. one &quot;right&quot; way of thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents accurate description of alternate viewpoints.</td>
<td>Relies on personal attacks and ridicule.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourages debate, discussion, and criticism.</td>
<td>Emotional appeals. Use of inflammatory language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looks for counter-examples.</td>
<td>Appeals to popular prejudices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admits own ignorance.</td>
<td>Transforms words and statistics to suit purpose.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currency
“Is the web site dated? Is this date the date of creation or the date the material was last updated? When was the page last updated?”
“Are the links the page provides still current?”

Coverage & Comparability
“What topics does the page cover?”
“How in-depth is the coverage of topics? Is the site intended to be comprehensive or selective?”
“How does the site compare with other related sites or other related print resources?”

Material used in this handout was adapted from the web sites:

“The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” by Susan Beck, New Mexico State University ([http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html](http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html))
“Evaluating Internet Resources” by Karen Lutgens, Illinois State University ([http://www.mlbl.ilstu.edu/ressubj/subject/intrnt/evaluate.htm](http://www.mlbl.ilstu.edu/ressubj/subject/intrnt/evaluate.htm))
“Critical Evaluation of Resources on the Internet” by Josie Tong, University of Alberta ([http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/criticalevaluation/index.cfm](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/criticalevaluation/index.cfm))