

Web site Evaluation

University of Wisconsin-eau Claire McIntyre Library Ten C's for evaluating Internet Resources:

1. Content

What is the intent of the content? Are the title and author identified? Is the content “juried”? Is the content “popular” or “scholarly”, satiric or serious? What is the date of the document or article? Is the “edition” current? Do you have the latest version? (Is this important?) How do you know?

2. Credibility

Is the author identifiable and reliable? Is the content credible? Authoritative? Should it be? What is the purpose of the information, that is, is it serious, satiric, humorous? Is the URL extension .edu, .com, .gov, or .org? What does this tell you about the “publisher”?

3. Critical Thinking

How can you apply critical thinking skills, including previous knowledge and experience, to evaluate Internet resources? Can you identify the author, publisher, edition, etc. as you would with a “traditionally” published resource? What criteria do you use to evaluate Internet resources?

4. Copyright

Even if the copyright notice does not appear prominently, someone wrote, or is responsible for, the creation of a document, graphic, sound or image, and the material falls under the copyright conventions. “Fair use” applies to short, cited excerpts, usually as an example for commentary or research. Materials and in the “public domain” if this is explicitly stated. Internet users, as users of print media must respect copyright.

5. Citation

Internet resources should be cited to identify sources used, both to give credit and the author and to provide the reader with avenues for further research. Standard style manuals (print and online) provide some examples of how to cite Internet documents, although standards have not yet been formally established.

6. Continuity

Will the Internet site be maintained and updated? Is it now and will it continue to be free? Can you rely on this source over time to provide up-to-date information? Some good .edu sites have move to .com, with possible cost implications. Other sites offer partial use for free, and charges fees for continued or in-depth use.

7. Censorship

Is your discussion list “moderated”? What does this mean? Does your search engine or index look for all words or some words excluded? Is this censorship? Does your institution, based on its mission parent organization or spaces limitations, apply some restrictions to Internet use? Consider censorship and privacy issues when using the Internet.

8. Connectivity

If more than one user will need to access a site, consider each users' access and "functionality". How do users connect to the Internet and what kind of connection does the assigned resource require? Does access to the resource require a graphical user interface? If it is a popular (busy) resource, will it be accessible in the time frame needed? Is it accessible by more than one Internet tool? Do users have the access to the same Internet tools and applications? Is the site "viewable" by all web browsers?

9. Comparability

Does the Internet resource have an identified comparable print or CD ROM data set or source? Does the Internet site contain comparable and complete information?(for example, some newspapers have partial but not full text information on the internet.) Do you need to compare data and statistics over time? Can you identify sources for comparable earlier or later data? Comparability of data may or may not be important, depending on your project.

10. Context

What is the context for your research? Can you find "anything" on your topic, that is commentary, opinion, narrative, statistics and your quest will be satisfied? Are you looking for current or historical information? Definitions? Research studies or articles? How does Internet information fit in the overall information context of your subject? Before you start searching, define the research context and research needs and decide what sources might be best to use to successfully fill information needs without data overload.

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SELECTION CRITERIA: *how to tell if you are looking at a great website.*

The World Wide Web is a lot like a flea market: there's a vast selection of sites to choose from but not a lot of order to it. Some sites are offered by reputable "dealers" and some from individuals who want to show off their personal favorite items. Sometimes it's hard to tell what's a hidden treasure, what's worth taking a look at and what's a waste of time.

Its not hard to find sites if you use a search engine like hotbot, or a subject directory like Yahoo (or Yahoooligans for kids). But how can you tell if a site you find is worthwhile?

Sometimes what is in a web site's address can indicate the nature of the site. Sites from commercial businesses usually include ".com"; federal government sites end in ".gov," K-12 schools sites often include "k12" in the address, and college and university sites often include ".edu" sites from non-profit organizations often include ".org" a site with a tilde (~) in the address

indicates that this page is maintained or created by an individual, rather than representing an organization, a business, or a school.

Children's librarians evaluate books, magazines tapes and software for children to find the best of all. Websites are no exception. On this page we have collected some excellent sites for young people. We will share with you what we look for in a great web site.

NOTES

1. Every site does not need to meet every one of these criteria to be a great site, but the more of them a site does meet the more likely it is to be a worthwhile place to spend time.
2. The content on the World Wide Web changes faster than anything we have ever seen in our culture. Therefore, in any recommended list of websites, the recommendations apply only to the primary sites that are listed, not to every site linked from the primary sites.
 - A. Authorship/Sponsorship: who put up the site?
 - i. The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated.
 - ii. The creator should give a source of information in the site where necessary.
 - iii. The website author or manager should provide a way for users to make comments or ask questions.
 - iv. The website author or manager should be responsive to any questions regarding copyright, trademark, or ownership of all material on the site. Sites that knowingly violate copyright statutes or other laws. Should not be linked, listed or recommended
 - B. Purpose: every site has a reason for being there.
 - i. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell.
 - ii. Advertising should not overshadow the content
 - iii. A good site should enrich the user's experience and expand the imagination. Sites promoting social biases (gender, racial, religious, or other types) rather than enlarging the views of the child should not be considered worthwhile sites.
 - C. Design and Stability: a great site has personality and strength of character.
 - i. Information on the site should be easy to find and easy to use.
 - ii. The site design should be appealing to the intended audience.
 - iii. The text should be easy to read, not to cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds.
 - iv. Users should be able to get around the site easily.
 - v. Pages consisting mainly of links should be well organized, appealing to young people and the collected links should be well chosen and useful to children exploring the subject.
 - vi. The sites design should be appropriate for the intended audience.
 - vii. A game or recreational site should have a clear interface and playing instructions.

- viii. The page should load in a reasonable amount of time.
 - ix. The page should be consistently available and load without problems; stability is important.
 - x. Required “plug-ins” or other helper applications should be clearly identified.
 - xi. The design elements and features on the site, such as searchable database, animations, graphics, sound files, introductory, and transitional pages, etc. should enhance and not hinder the accessibility and enjoyment of the site.
 - xii. The interactive features should be explained clearly.
 - xiii. A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.
- D. Content: a great site shares meaningful and useful content that educates, informs, or entertains.
- i. The title of a site should be appropriate to its purpose.
 - ii. A site’s content should be easy to read and understand by its intended audience.
 - iii. There should be enough information to make visiting the site worthwhile.
 - iv. If there are large amounts of information on the site, some kind of search function should be provided. There should be at least an outline of topics covered, allowing the users to find topics and move among them easily.
 - v. Spelling and grammar always should be correct.
 - vi. The information should be current and accurate, and if the topic of the site is one that changes, it should be updated regularly. A “last updated” date is a plus.
 - vii. Links to more information on the topic should be provided.
 - viii. Graphics on the site should be relevant and appropriate to the content
 - ix. The subject matter should be relevant and appropriate for the intended audience.
 - x. The view point presented should be comprehensible to the intended audience
 - xi. The skills required to use the site’s features and structure should be appropriate or appropriately challenging for its intended audience.
 - xii. In the informational sites, especially those used to support school assignments, quality of content people should be most important. Appealing sites for general audiences that are accessible to young people sometimes provide the highest quality content.
 - xiii. Some sites, such as health and life-education sites, may include mature content. Such material should be developmentally appropriate to the information needs of youth.

[Http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/criteria.html](http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/criteria.html)