

Evaluating Information Found on the Web

The World Wide Web is a tremendous resource for finding information. But there are a few things you need to keep in mind:

- ◆ *The web is big and growing every day. No search engine covers everything on the Web. Try different search engines to see which ones give you better results.*
- ◆ *The Web is unedited. Be careful using the Web because no one controls, filters, edits or censors what is put on the Web. **Always remember: anyone can post anything on the Web.***
- ◆ *The Web is unstable. Web addresses often change. Web pages are put on the Web and removed from the Web constantly. What you found on the Web today may not be there tomorrow.*
- ◆ *The Web is constantly evolving. New search engines appear seemingly every day. Part of the challenge of the Web is staying abreast of all of the changes.*

Evaluating what you find on the Web

Some specific questions to ask:

Who created this page?

Was it a person or a group? What are their qualifications? If an individual, do they have an academic affiliation? A professional affiliation? If it is an organization, do they give you any information on the organization itself? Is it a company trying to sell you something? Is it a political organization trying to convince you to vote for someone? What is the address (the URL) of the page? Is it .edu? .org? .com? Does the address tell you anything?

What is the scope of this page?

Is it broad and general or narrow and specific? If it covers a time period, do they tell you what that period is? How current is the information? Do they tell you when the page was last updated?

What is the content of this page?

How much of this is opinion, and how much is fact? If they are giving facts or data, is it accurate data? Do they simply present data, or do they draw conclusions from that data? Do they cite their sources? How reliable are their sources? How current are their sources? Does the page have original information or just links to other pages? Are the links current? Is the information verifiable from other sources?

Why do you think this page was created?

What was the purpose of creating this page? Is it to express an opinion? Convey information? Sell you something? Get you to vote for someone? Who do you think the intended audience is?

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