Karrmann Library Guide to Evaluating Web Pages

Pros and Cons to Internet Research:

**Pros**
- Fast access to lots of information
- Often information is current
- Can find both expert and popular opinions

**Cons**
- Information found may be unreliable
- Information may not be organized well
- Information may not be free

Note: Most published resources such as e-books, books, and journals go through an editing and peer review process, but information put onto the Web mostly is unfiltered, and therefore the quality of Web pages varies greatly.

Suspicious or questionable Web pages can be found as easily as scholarly and credible ones.

Evaluating Web Resources

Consider the source and/or the author of the Web page—Who is the author and what are his/her credentials?

Take a look at the purpose or the feel of the Web page—Who is the intended audience? Why was the page put online?

Evaluate the appearance and the accessibility of the Web page—Are the links working? Are there spelling or grammatical errors?

Study the content of the Web page—Are there supporting references? Does the content seem biased or objective? Has the Web page been recently updated?

Do reliable organizations or sites link to the Web page?
More guidelines for evaluating Web pages:

**Authority/Authorship**
- Is it easy to determine the author of the Web page?
- Does the author or compiler of the site list his or her occupation, education, or other credentials?
- Is the person qualified on the topic?
- Is an organization or institution responsible for the content?
- Is there contact information for the author or sponsor of the Web page?
- Is there a link to a page describing the purpose of the sponsoring organization?

**Accuracy**
- Is the information presented as fact or opinion?
- If the information is presented as fact, can it be assessed for accuracy, that is, is there a list of references?
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and other typographical errors?

**Objectivity**
- Are the goals or aims of the person or group presenting the material clearly stated?
- Is the information provided as a public service?
- Are there advertisements on the Web page; if so, is it clearly differentiated from the informative content?
- Is the information of the Web page biased?
- Is there a hidden agenda?
- Do any of the links on the Web page reveal a bias of the author?

**Currency**
- Is there an indication of when the information was created, was placed on the Web, or updated?
- Are there any other indications that the material is kept current?
- If the information is published in different editions, is it clear what edition the Web page is from?

**Coverage**
- Does the information presented cover the topic extensively?
- Is there clear indication of whether the page is finished, if it covers the entire research or a portion of it?
Additional sites on how to evaluate Web resources:

**Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask**  
By the University of California at Berkeley Library  
[http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html)

**Evaluate Sources**  
By the University of Wisconsin-Madison  

**Evaluating Information Found on the Internet**  
By Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries  
[http://guides.library.jhu.edu/content.php?pid=198142&sid=1657518](http://guides.library.jhu.edu/content.php?pid=198142&sid=1657518)

Try your hand at evaluating these Web sites:

The endangered Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus— [http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/](http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/)

The “hospital” where extraordinary things such as male pregnancy occur —  
[http://rythospital.com](http://rythospital.com)