Project Look Sharp

BET networks · Google · DEMOCRACY NOW! · FOX NEWS

ITHACA COLLEGE
School of Humanities and Sciences

About Us | Lesson Plans | Staff Development | Contact Us |

Search Resources

Webinars

Internships

Workshops, Keynotes Consulting

Media Literacy Handouts

Project Look Sharp Articles & Publications

DIY Guide

Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy

Other Resources & Organizations

Workshop Participants Only

Join PLS Email List

Donate

Separating Fact and Fiction:
Examining the Credibility of Information on the Internet
Criteria for Examination | Technical Strategies for Evaluating Web Sites | Internet Credibility Sites

Criteria for Evaluating Information on the Internet (PDF)

Authority
Author or sponsor of the site. Qualifications and reputation of author/source. The authority and reputation of the source of the information will depend on the expertise, reputation and status of the source.

Questions to Ask	Clues to Look For
Is there an author? Is the page signed?	Look for a header or footer stating authorship or an e-mail/postal address
Is the author qualified and/or reputable? An expert?	Are the author's credentials listed? What information can you find about the author through other searches or databases?
Who is the sponsor?	Sponsorship statement? Is there an "about" link?
Is the sponsor of the page reputable? How reputable?	--Is there a link of information about the author or the sponsor? Who links to this site? Go to www.altavista.com, type in the search window: **link:**_all or part of url_
If the page includes neither a signature nor a sponsor, is there any other way to determine its origin?	Is there an "about" link? Look at/dissect the URL Look at the domain and country codes Try a "who is" search http://www.netsol.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois
Are there links that take you outside of the site?	Look for frames, URL's different from the current site. Try opening each link in a new page to see the true URL.

Accuracy
Reliable and error-free information. Conformity to fact. Precision; exactness.

Questions to Ask	Clues to Look For
Is the information reliable and error-free?	typographical errors, spelling mistakes, bad grammar, credentials of the info. provider
Is there an editor or someone who verifies/checks the information?	Is the information part of a larger publication, can you find the home page and access editorial information?
Where doubt exists, can the information be cross-checked with a reliable source?	Bibliographies, references, check with established, reliable, sources

Objectivity
Judgment based on observable phenomena and uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices

Questions to Ask	Clues to Look For
Does the information show a minimum of bias?	--Who links to this site? Go to www.altavista.com, type in the search window: **link:**_all or part of url_

	(see "AUTHORITY")
Is the page designed to sway opinion?	--A statement of the aims and objectives of the site (often in the "about this site" section).
Is there any advertising on the page?	advertising banners, links to commercial sites selling products/services

Currency

Belonging to the present time, being in progress now: current negotiations, prevalent, especially at the present time.

Questions to Ask	Clues to Look For
Is the page dated?	Date on page (often at bottom of page, news articles may have the date at the top of the article).
If so, when was the last update?	Is the date when the material was first written, first placed on the Web, or the date of when it was last revised?
How current are the links? Have some expired or moved?	Click on links to pages inside and outside of the site. Do they work?

Coverage

The extent or degree to which something is observed, analyzed, and reported.

Questions to Ask	Clues to Look For
Is there an indication that the page has been completed, and is not still under construction?	"Construction" signs, non-functioning links
If there is a print equivalent to the Web page, is there a clear indication of whether the entire work is available on the Web or only parts of it?	
What topics are covered? How in-depth is the material?	An index A site map

Technical Strategies for Evaluating Web Sites

1. Study the URL

URL stands for "uniform resource locator" — the info shows up in the location bar in Netscape or Internet Explorer. A web page's URL address can help you identify the sponsor or source:

- Non-governmental and/or professional organization web pages: look for **org** (organization)
- Governmental web pages: look for **gov** (government)
- Corporate/business/for profit web pages: look for **com** (commercial)
- Educational institution web pages: look for **edu** (educational)
- Personal web pages frequently have a tilde (~), %, "users" or "people" in the URL and may include com, edu, or org

Be aware, though, that **there are always exceptions** so check the web page as well for additional clues. Frequently, these clues can be found at the top or bottom of a web page, or through a web page link.

Anatomy of a URL			
http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html			
Type of file (could say ftp:// or telnet://)	Domain name (computer file is on and its location on the Internet)	Path or directory on the computer to this file	Name of file, usually ending in .html or .htm
http://	www.lib.berkeley.edu/	TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/	FindInfo.html
from Glossary: Web Searching and Netscape Jargon			
Teaching Library Internet Workshops University of California, Berkeley			

2. What is the overall context of the page you are viewing?

Try truncating elements of the url to back up and see how the page "fits" into the overall site. Do this

by starting at the right and erasing back to the left to the next /

> Example: http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/deadsea.scrolls.exhibit/Library/psalms.html <--- erase psalms.html and press enter or return and you will see a "directory" or folder full of files, then try erasing Library. Keep repeating this process.

3. Where are you on the web?
Because the web allows for simple linking from one page to another, it is important to always know where you are. The use of frames compounds this problem.

One click and the info you are looking at is not really on "their" site. Notice if you pause over a hypertext link, the target url is shown at the bottom of the screen. PC browsers will let you right click on the link and "Open in New Window" — Mac users click and hold down and select a similar choice from the popup menu.

4. Does the page have overall integrity and reliability as a source?
Use a search engine like AltaVista to see who links to the page. Then visit some of those sites to see what they say about the page in question.
In AltaVista precede the URL by the term link: with no space after the colon.

Example. In search box enter: link:www.whitehouse.net

5. Who owns the domain name?
This may be helpful if there is no contact information on the page itself. Look up the domain registry page at the appropriate registry agency:

- For .com, .edu, .net, .org : http://www.netsol.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois
- For .gov (U.S. government) : http://www.whois.net
- For .mil (U.S. military) : http://www.bb-online.com/tlds/mil.shtml
- For Asian-Pacific :http://www.apnic.net/apnic-bin/whois.pl
- For European : http://www.ripe.net/perl/whois
- And the rest of the world: http://www.whois.net