

Middle Georgia State University

Student Success Center

Evaluating Internet Resources

The Internet has made it possible to obtain information from around the world with just a few clicks of the mouse. But how do we evaluate the quality, authority, and accuracy of that information? The following criteria are a good starting point:

Remember that quality control does not exist

The beauty of the Internet is that anyone can be a publisher. The bane of the Internet is that anyone can be a publisher. When searching on the Web, keep in mind that there is no quality control, not everything found on the Internet is true, and that not all information is published on the Web.

Research Needs

Before searching the Web, knowing the kind of information you are interested in will help you to evaluate the hits you receive. For example, if you type the search term “death penalty” into a search engine, you will receive thousands of hits. But do you need personal opinion, historical research, government information or data, or research articles? Knowing what information you need assists in the research process.

Authorship

Who wrote this? Is it a university professor? A researcher? A hate group? Are they affiliated with any institution or organization? If so, which one? Is the author an authority or expert on the topic? Look for an e-mail link, address or telephone number, and check links to other sites.

Point of View or Bias

Statistics and cited literature are used to support a point of view. It is good practice to discern the author’s point-of-view or bias. Check URLs and remember that corporations and sociopolitical organizations will present themselves in the best light possible.

Currency

Check to see if the document has a date posted stating when the web site was created and when it was last updated. Updates indicate that the researcher continually revises their work as new information becomes available or that they have re-evaluated the information they are presenting.

Content

Figure out if the content on the site is satirical, scholarly, infotainment, or the presentation of research. Does the web site quote reliable, well-known sources like *The New York Times* or other more scholarly journals, books, and newspapers? Look for the same things you would in a research paper like a bibliography and proper use of citations.

Comparability

Check other web sites to see if the views portrayed on a certain web site are supported by other reputable authors and organizations.