

Evaluating Web Sites

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a checklist of items that make a web site reliable and relevant for academic work? Web sites, like all information, are contextual. Anyone can put up a web site and web sites are not put through the usual academic processes such as a book which is selected by a librarian, or through the peer review process for journal articles. Instead, there is a great amalgamation of information out there unorganized, and out of context.

Here are some questions that you can ask yourself when you are looking at a web site to determine if it is appropriate and useful for you assignments.

- How in-depth is your assignment? Does the web site match the depth and scope of your assignment?
- Is the site relevant to your topic?
- Think about what the purpose of the web page is—to convince the reader of what? To what type audience is the page trying to appeal?
- If the information on the site is questionable in some respect, what makes you question it? What type of research this site could be used for?
- Compare your site to another web site; what can you tell about each site just from comparison?
- How many clicks does it take to leave your site? It is a main page or off-shoots of a web site? Is there a “parent” site? i.e. the Ole Miss homepage is the parent page to the library web site.
- Compare your site to an article in *Academic Search Premier* (EbscoHost).
- Is there any variation of facts among the sources?
- Compare the dates of the article and other web sites? What kind of effect does this have on your analysis?
- What about this web site convinces you that it is a site relevant for academic work?
- Which of the sources you've located do you think your professor would most like to see in your bibliography?

Need more help finding articles or locating reliable web sites? Ask a librarian at the Information/Reference Desk.