

## Evaluating Web Pages for Academic Research

Unlike books and periodical articles, Web *only* sources may be published by anyone. It is important to assess the quality of Web pages *before* using them for your academic research. Note: if a Web source is a book or periodical article that has a print equivalent, evaluate it as you would the print source. For information regarding evaluating books and periodicals articles, refer to the following Mission College Handout: *Evaluating Books & Periodical Articles for Academic Research*.

**Authority:** What are the qualifications/credentials of the person or organization responsible for the site?

- What does the Domain or URL tell you?
- Who created or developed the site? (Look for clickable links in the title area of the page that may lead to more information about a person or organization. Truncate the URL (web address) to find the “parent” website.)
- Can you identify the person or organization responsible?
- Is it clear who wrote the material and are the author’s qualifications for writing on this topic clearly stated?
- Can you verify the author’s qualification from another source?
- Is there a way of verifying the legitimacy of the page’s sponsor? Is there a phone number or postal address? (An email address is not enough.)

**If you cannot determine who is responsible for a Web page, or what their credentials are, then you should not use it.**

**Accuracy:** Is the information correct?

- Are the sources cited? Can you verify the facts in another source?
- Is it clear who has responsibility for the information? Do they have expertise in the subject?

**If there is no indication on the Web page for you to determine if the information is accurate, or that the author/publisher has expertise in the subject, then you should not use it.**

**Coverage:** Does the page adequately address your topic?

- Can you tell what the page intends to cover and does it succeed?
- Is the information available on current page, or do you need to click on a link to retrieve it? (If you need to go to another page, then you need to evaluate *that* Web page; not the page with the link.)

**If the Web page does not have any new or useful information for your topic, or is just a page with links, then you should not use it.**

**Objectivity/Bias:** Can you determine the purpose and objectivity of the site?

- Is there a slant, or bias?
- Does the site try to sell a point of view or product?
- Is there an obvious purpose or audience?

**If the site is not objective, it may still be okay to use it; it will depend on the purpose of your research and your ability to find other sources that present the opposing viewpoint.**

**Currency:** When was the information published?

- Are there any dates posted?
- If material is presented in graphs and/or charts, is it clearly stated when the data was gathered?

**If you cannot determine a date, or if the date indicates that the information is not current, it may still be okay to use it, but it depends on your topic.**