

Evaluating Web Sites: Criteria and Tools

➡ Context: The Primary Factor

The User Context: The most important factor when evaluating Web sites is your search, your needs. What are you using the Web for? Entertainment? Academic work? Hobbies or avocational interests? Scholarly sources are traditionally very strongly text-based. Compare the appearance and the content of an academic journal with a popular magazine.

The Web Context: Some of the visual distinctions that signal the nature of content in print sources hold true on the Web as well, although, because the Web encourages wider use of graphics, Web versions of printed works usually contain more graphics and more color than their print counterparts. Color graphics appeared on the New York Times Web site before they appeared in the printed New York Times, for instance.

Compare the Web versions of Child Abuse and Neglect (Cornell only), Mississippi Review (free to the public), The New York Times, U. S. News, and the National Enquirer.

➡ Evaluation Criteria

--- **Same as printed books and journals?:** Critically Analyzing Information Sources from the Cornell University Library.

- Author
- Date of Publication
- Edition or Revision
- Publisher
- Title of Journal

- Intended Audience
- Objective Reasoning
- Coverage
- Writing Style
- Evaluative Reviews

--- **Evaluating Web Pages: Questions to Ask & Strategies for Getting the Answers:** An eight-point evaluation checklist from the UC Berkeley Library.

- What can the URL tell you?
- Who wrote the page? Is he, she, or the authoring institution a qualified authority?
- Is it dated? Current, timely?
- Is information cited authentic?
- Does the page have overall integrity and reliability as a source?
- What's the bias?
- Could the page or site be ironic, like a satire or a spoof?
- If you have questions or reservations, how can you satisfy them?

--- **Evaluating Information Found on the Internet** from Johns Hopkins University (Elizabeth E. Kirk):

- Authorship
- Publishing body
- Point of view or bias
- Referral to other sources
- Verifiability
- Currency
- How to distinguish propaganda, misinformation and disinformation
- The mechanics of determining authorship, publishing body, and currency on the Internet

--- **Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages (Jim Kapoun):**

- Accuracy
- Authority
- Currency
- Objectivity
- Coverage

To evaluate Web sites go to this table of criteria and questions to ask when judging the reliability of information on the Web.

--- **Generic Criteria for Evaluation (Hope Tillman):**

- Stated criteria for inclusion of information
- Authority of author or creator
- Comparability with related sources
- Stability of information
- Appropriateness of format
- Software/hardware/multimedia requirements

--- ...Criteria for the Evaluation of Internet Information Resources (Alastair Smith)

--- ICYouSee: T is for Thinking (John Henderson)

➡ **Online Selection Examples: Subject Portals**

BUBL Information Service

The WWW Virtual Library

Selection by librarians:

Librarians' Index to the Internet [UC Berkeley]

Internet Reference Resources [Cornell University]

➡ **Webliography**

[Dates refer to the last dated revision seen]

Barker, Joe, and Saifon Obromsook. Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask. (Library, University of California--Berkeley, 11 August 2009)

Henderson, John R. The ICYouSee Critical Thinking Guide. (Ithaca College, NY; 26 August 2009)

Kapoun, Jim. "Teaching Undergrads WEB Evaluation: A Guide for Library Instruction." *C&RL News* (July/August 1998): 522-523.

Kirk, Elizabeth E. Evaluating Information Found on the Internet. (The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University; 1996 copyright date).

Smith, Alastair G. "Testing the Surf: Criteria for Evaluating Internet Information Resources." The *Public-Access Computer Systems Review* 8, no. 3 (1997). (Victoria University of Wellington, NZ; 1997 copyright date)

Tillman, Hope. Evaluating Quality on the Net. (Babson College, MA; 28 March 2003)

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