


Website Evaluation

Separating the Wheat
from the Chaff

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The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the bottom right corner, there are several decorative elements consisting of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water. These circles are in a lighter shade of blue and are arranged in a cluster, with one small circle at the top right and several larger ones below it.

“Credibility”

- Credibility is defined as the quality or power of inspiring belief. The English word comes from the Latin word *credere*: to believe, trust.
- A resource that is credible is one which shows evidence of authenticity, reliability and believability. Basically, the key to credibility is trust...

From <http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/wp/credibility/>

Eight Criteria

1. Authority
 2. Accuracy / Reliability
 3. Objectivity
 4. Currency
 5. Comprehensiveness
 6. Design & Layout
 7. Ease-of-Use / Navigability
 8. Usefulness
- 

Authority

- URL information? Type of domain? Personal page or site?
 - .gov .edu .mil .int .us .com .org .net
- Can you truncate back to basic domain?
- Sponsor or publisher? (Note: <http://www.allwhois.com/>)
- Links to third-party support for the information presented? (& vice versa. In Google Search, link:url.url)
- Identifiable author?
 - (Credentials? “About Us” Google the author?)
- If an organization, credentials of others given?
- Contact information? (street address, email)

Accuracy / Reliability

- **Reviewed?** (Part of an edited or peer-reviewed publication?)
- **Verifiable?** (Can factual information be verified through footnotes or bibliographies to other credible sources?)
- **Documented sources?** (Scholarly journals or otherwise reliable sources? Hyperlinked “webliography” of cited sources?)
- **Fit with existing knowledge?** (Based on what you already know about the subject, or have checked from other sources)
- **Responsibility?** (Is it clear who has the responsibility for the accuracy of the information presented?)
- **Endorsements?** (Does an institution or internet provider support or endorse the information?)
- **Data?** (Is statistical data labeled clearly; source provided?)

Objectivity / Purpose

- Ironic or satirical? Parody?
- Bias? (due to *author's* or organization's affiliation)
- Minimal (or no) promotional material
- If an organization, mission/membership stated?
- Publication, Web page or parent site directed towards a particular audience?
- Inflammatory or provocative language?
- Sufficient evidence for conclusions drawn?

Further Note on Bias

- Bias can be very subtle, and subtly pervasive
- Holistically, take perceived *accuracy*, *authority*, *reliability* & *purpose* into account
- Your own general knowledge; critical thinking
- If a controversial issue, are both sides presented?
- Still, difficult to detect subtle forms of racism, ethnocentrism, political bias, etc...
- What do recognized directories say?
(<http://about.com>, <http://infomine.ucr.edu>, <http://lii.org>)

Currency

- Most recent update of page?
- If article, date of article (as distinct from page)?
- Links still active?
- Do the links point to current information?
- Dates of external link checks noted?

Comprehensiveness

- Broad perspective or viewpoint of the topic
- Links to appropriate array of related internal and external documents
- Again, if controversial, both sides presented?

Design & Layout

- **Is the site searchable?** (internal search engine)
- **Usefulness of information?**
- **Overall site design?** (layout, typography, images, consistency, appropriate balance of graphics to text)
- **Error-free?** (grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, etc.)
- **Load time** (appropriate amount of graphics and multimedia)

Disclaimer? Privacy statement? Consideration of users with disabilities?

Ease of Use / Navigability

- Ease of Use (User-friendly with effective interface?)
- Navigable, with clear paths?
- Well organized? (e.g., is there a site map?)

Usefulness of Information

- All of the above, considering your purpose.
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On to a few examples...



Some Examples

- Feline Reactions: <http://www.improbable.com/airchives/classical/cat/cat.html>
- Bonsai Kitten: <http://www.bonsaikitten.com/>
- Dihydrogen Monoxide: <http://www.dhmo.org>
- Ruritania: <http://homepages.udayton.edu/~ahern/rurindx.htm>
- Group for Reappraisal of AIDS: <http://www.rethinkingaids.com/>
- Families Against Censorship: <http://www.netfamilies.org/>
- Global Warming: <http://www.globalwarming.org/>
- Tropical Minnesota: <http://www.lme.mankato.msus.edu/mankato/mankato.html>

Crib Conclusions

- Remember the 8: CACADUNO
(*Cur / Auth / Cov / Acc / Des / Use / Nav / Obj*)
- Credentials are **Key** (check offsite sources too)
- URL is a **Clue** (domain name & “allwhois”)
- Check Links, Out & In (Google = link:url.url)
- Read the Fine Print (“About Us”, etc.)
- Understand *Bias vs. Bogus*