

Hey there!
Have you evaluated?



Is that *site*
good enough to *cite*?

Hmmm.
This one looks good.
How
can I tell for sure?



It's okay to be confused!

- There are billions of websites out there
- Many of them are not worthy of your time and don't belong in your citations!
- Sometimes it's very hard to tell treasure from trash
- Sometimes Web developers don't want you to understand the difference

Remember:
Anyone can publish
anything
on the Web!



It is your job, as a
researcher, to look for
quality!

Okay, so how do we know if a site is good?

Yeah, and how can we be sure *our teacher* will think it's good enough to cite?



Think of CARRDSS

- **C**REDIBILITY / AUTHORITY
- **A**CCURACY
- **R**ELIABILITY
- **R**ELEVANCE
- **D**ATE
- **S**OURCES BEHIND THE TEXT
- **S**COPE AND PURPOSE



CREDIBILITY / AUTHORITY :

Who is the author?

What are his or her credentials? Education? Experience?
Affiliation?

Does the author's experience really qualify him or her as an expert?

Does he or she offer first-hand credibility? (For instance, a Vietnam veteran or a witness to Woodstock?)

Who actually published this page?

Is this a personal page or is it part of the site belonging to a major institution? (Clues pointing to a personal page: ~ tilde, %, users, members)

Is the page hosted by a free server like AOL, Tripod, Geocities?

But what if I can't
find any
author information?



Look for credibility clues!

- Words and phrases to look for:
 - *About us, Who Am I, FAQs, For More, Company Information, Profiles, Our Staff, Home*
- E-mail the author
 - If you have no information other than an e-mail link, write a polite e-mail asking for more information.

Truncate the URL

Delete characters in the address line up to the next slash mark to see if a main page offers more information about who is responsible for publishing the page you are interested in.

Go from:

- <http://www.statecollege.edu/history/middleages/chaucer/smith.htm>
- <http://www.statecollege.edu/history/middleages/chaucer>
- <http://www.statecollege.edu/history/middleages>
- <http://www.statecollege.edu/history>
- <http://www.statecollege.edu>

Still more credibility clues

If you have an author's name but no further information about credentials,

- Search the name in quotation marks in a search engine or online database
- On the Web, include words like *profile*, *resume*, or *C.V.* (curriculum vitae--an academic resume) to narrow your name search
- You might also include the name of a college or association you can connect with the person
- Search the name in biographical sources on- and offline
- Ask your teacher-librarian for help

ACCURACY:

- Can facts, statistics, or other information be verified through other sources?
- Based on your knowledge, does the information seem accurate? Is the information inconsistent with information you learned from other sources?
- Is the information second hand? Has it been altered?
- Do there appear to be errors on the page (spelling, grammar, facts)?

Practice checking for accuracy with a few of these sites!

- California's Velcro Crop Under Challenge
- <http://home.inreach.com/kumbach/velcro.html>
- Republic of Cascadia: Bureau of Sasquatch Affairs
- <http://zapatopi.net/bsa.html>
- Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division
- <http://www.dhmo.org/>
- For more examples:
<http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/evaluating.html>

R ELIABILITY:

Does the source present a particular view or bias?

Is the page affiliated with an organization that has a particular political or social agenda?

Is the page selling a product?

Can you find other material to offer balance so that you can see the bigger picture?

Was the information found in a *paid placement* or *sponsored result* from the search engine?

Information is seldom neutral. Sometimes a bias is useful for persuasive essays or debates.

Understanding bias is important.

Considering Bias

(Include here links to sites with bias. Preferably present more than one point of view.)

Multnomah County Library's Social Issues page offers links to sites on all sides of major issues:

<http://www.multcolib.org/homework/sochc.html>

RELEVANCE:

- Does this information directly support my hypothesis/thesis or help to answer my question?
- Can I eliminate or ignore it because it simply doesn't help me?

DATE:

- When was this information created?
- When was it revised?
- Are these dates meaningful in terms of your information needs?
- Has the author of the page stopped maintaining it?
- (Be suspicious of undated material.)

SOURCES BEHIND THE TEXT:

- Did the author bother to document his or her sources? use reliable, credible sources?
- Were those references popular, scholarly, reputable?
- Are those sources real? Have you or your librarian heard of or been able to verify them?
- Is the material reproduced (accurately) from another publication?
- What kind of links did the author choose?
- Are the hyperlinks reliable, valuable?
- Do the links work?



SCOPE / PURPOSE:

Does this source address my hypothesis/thesis/question in a comprehensive or peripheral way?

- Is it a scholarly or popular treatment?
- Is it material I can read and understand?
 - Is it too simple? Is it too challenging?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Why was this page created? To inform or explain? To persuade? To sell?

URLs as clues to content

- .com=commercial sites (vary in their credibility)
- .gov=U.S. government site
- .org=organization, often non-profit. Some have strong bias and agendas
- .edu=school or university site (is it K-12? By a student? By a scholar?)
- .store=retail business
- .int=international institution
- .ac=educational institution (like .edu)
- .mil=U.S. military site
- .net=networked service provider, Internet administrative site
- .museum=museum
- .name=individual Internet user
- .biz=a business
- .pro=professional's site
- ~personal site

What do their URLs reveal about these sites?

- <http://personal.statecollege.edu/~ejv114/>
- <http://www.fi.edu/wright/index.html>
- <http://www.house.gov/house/Legproc.html>
- <http://aolmembers.com/joyciev328/civalwarsong>

Remember, the *free* Web is not your only choice?

- Did you use print sources?
- Did you search subscription databases?
- Did you check with your teacher-librarian for advice?

So, why should we care
about all of this?



There are bigger questions in life!

You will be using information to make important decisions!

- Which car should I buy?
 - Which doctor should I choose?
 - Should my child have this surgery?
 - Should I take this medication?
-
- You want to be able to ensure the information you choose is reliable, credible, current, balanced, relevant, and accurate!

Just as you evaluate your sources . . .

Your teacher will evaluate your work based on the quality of the sources you select.

Evaluate carefully. Don't settle for *good enough!*

Quality always counts!



**Evaluation is
important!**

Learn to be fussy!