Evaluate: Web Pages

Review these criteria to determine the relevancy of information found on the Internet.

First Criterion - ACCURACY
- how reliable and free from error is the information?
  - almost anyone can publish on the web
  - many web resources are not verified by editors or fact-checkers
  - web standards to ensure accuracy are still under development

Second Criterion - AUTHORITY
- what are the author’s qualifications for writing on this subject?
  - how reputable is the publisher or organization?
  - it is sometimes difficult to determine authorship of a web resource
  - the author’s qualifications/background are often not listed

Third Criterion - OBJECTIVITY
- is the information presented with a minimum of bias?
  - to what extent is the information trying to sway the opinion of the audience?
  - the web often serves as a “virtual soapbox” for personal opinions
  - the goals or aims of persons or groups presenting information are often not clearly stated

Fourth Criterion - CURRENCY
- is the content of the work up-to-date?
  - is the publication date clearly labeled?
  - dates are not always included on web pages, or the meaning of the date is unclear (is it the date the information was first written, first posted, or last updated?)

Fifth Criterion - COVERAGE
- what topics are included on the site?
  - are the topics explored in detail or depth?
  - web coverage may differ significantly from a similar print resource
  - it is often hard to determine the extent of web coverage
**Some additional concerns** -

- many web pages blend information, entertainment and advertising (it can be difficult to tell the difference)
- some web sites are purely marketing tools
- many web pages are unstable and will disappear
- software requirements may limit access
- the danger of altering the content of web pages by unknown parties

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**Signs of authority** -

The top-level domain part of a web site’s address can tell a lot about the legitimacy of the site

- **.edu** - linked to an educational institution (though this also includes individual student web pages!)
- **.org** - non-profit organizations or associations
- **.gov** - a governmental department or agency, or government officials
- **.com** - a commercial site, online service, or a for-profit organization
- **.mil** - U.S. military organizations
- **.int** - international organizations
- **.net** - networking organizations

- look for citations, or some form of verification for the information presented on a web site

- the name and address of an author of a web site is reassuring, though this does not necessarily guarantee authority or legitimacy