

Evaluating Websites

The Internet is a fantastic technology that has infiltrated the world and makes access to information fast and convenient. However, all websites *are not the same* and can not be trusted to always give accurate information. Anyone with a computer and an Internet connection has the capability to put up a web page.

Print sources, such as books, reference materials, journals, or newspapers, are put through a rigorous series of evaluations before they get onto the Library's shelves. Some, though not all, of these kinds of evaluations include editing, peer review, independent review, and finally, selection by the librarians here at SUNY Geneseo.

Internet web pages are typically not evaluated by an authoritative body in the same manner as print. This means that you will have to decide if a source is appropriate for your research needs by doing the assessment for yourself. Always question *how* you know the answers to your questions. Following are the ABC criteria for consideration:

Authority/Accuracy

- Who is the author/creator of the information? Why do you consider the author a reliable source for this information?
- What can you determine about their education, occupation, training or experience?
- Are sources listed so that they can be verified?

Bias

- Is the information presented in an impartial manner?
- What organization (company, university, government) is presenting the information?
- Who is the intended audience? Is it written for scholars? Kids? Entertainment purposes?
- Is this organization motivated by profit? Educational? Political?
- What is the relationship of the author to the institution (employee, owner, competitor)?

Currency

- When was this information created or collected?
- When was the web page created and posted?
- Has it ever been updated? Recently updated?

If you aren't certain, come to the Reference Desk for help!