**Evaluating Websites**

Websites are produced by a wide variety of people ranging from professors to salespeople to grade school students. The quality of the information provided in these websites also ranges from high-quality informative websites to very little worthwhile information. Since not all websites are created equal and are not equally valuable, the following questions provide some points to consider when deciding whether or not to use a particular website.

**Author or Producer:**
Who is the author or producer of the information?
- Does the author have credentials or degrees showing expertise in the subject?
- Does the author’s occupation or life experience provide expertise?

Is the site sponsored by an organization?
- Is the organization well-known and reputable?
- Are you familiar with the organization?
- Is the organization affiliated with a particular profession or a research institution?
- Do other resources refer to this organization and their research?
- Does the organization have a particular bias?

Does the author or sponsoring organization provide a bibliography citing current resources?

Is information on how to contact the author or sponsoring organization provided?

To find answers to the above questions you may need to trace back in the URL (website address) to a higher directory or go to the website’s homepage.

**Content:**
Is the purpose of the website to give information or to sell a product or service?

Frequently, the website purpose is evident in the URL (website address)
- **.edu** for educational or research material may be a professor’s, teacher’s, or graduate student’s website or may be a K-12 school, college, or university website
- **.gov** for U.S. Government resources
- **.org** for non-profit organizations
- **.com or .net** for commercial products or commercially-sponsored websites

Is the information reliable and accurate?
- Can the information be verified?
- Are references provided to other current print and web information resources?

How does the information compare to other information sources you have consulted such as encyclopedias, other reference works, books, and journal articles?
- Is the information presented unavailable in books or journal articles?
- Is the website objective or biased?
- Is the information well-written in a style similar to an encyclopedia or journal article?

Does the website adequately cover the subject?
- Does the site provide links to other related websites or only to links within the website?
- Are the links relevant and appropriate to the subject?

Is the website appropriate for the intended audience? Is the website intended for academic users?

**Currency:**
Is the information current?
- What is the date of the document?
- When was the website last updated? Is the website updated regularly?

Are the links to other websites reliable?
- Have the other websites moved?
- Are the other websites still available on the Internet?