

MILSTEIN UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY

Navigation

EVALUATING ONLINE SOURCES

How do you determine if a source is credible? You can evaluate the reliability and scholarship of information you find both online and in print by using these guidelines:

- **Authorship**
If the author is not identified be wary. When an article or website is authored anonymously it has little credibility. It should be evident who created the content. What are the author's credentials? Does he/she have expertise in this field? Is biographical information provided?
- **Publisher**
This can help you determine the origin of the document, for example whether it is produced by an established publisher, a government agency, a nonprofit organization, or a commercial website. Consider the publisher's reputation and trustworthiness.
- **Accuracy and objectivity**
Can the facts presented on a website be substantiated elsewhere? Beware of information that can't be confirmed or that presents a biased view. Always check multiple sources to determine credibility.
- **Timeliness**
Be aware of when the web page was created and how recently it's been updated. Is the information current? Outdated information and broken links indicate the page is not being maintained.
- **Footnotes and bibliographies**
Legitimate references and links to other sources can add to a document's credibility and depth of scholarship.
- **Sponsorship**
Some sites are officially approved by the parent organization to which they're linked. Others can be on a parent site but not officially sponsored by the organization. A personal homepage on a university's server does not automatically confer credibility.

To learn more, contact Anice Mills, Undergraduate Services Librarian.

UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY SERVICES

Today's Hours: 12:00AM—12:00AM

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TIPS FOR EVALUATING INTERNET SITES FOR CREDIBILITY

More and more of us are turning to the World Wide Web for health information. The Web has opened up many new opportunities for improving our knowledge of health issues and in becoming better health care consumers. But the quality of health information we obtain over the Internet varies tremendously. Thus, it is important that we assess the credibility of each Web page that we access.

Document the source of the information to the fullest extent possible. Always scrutinize header information and return to the home page to determine the source of the information.

Try to determine the credibility of the source.

- Is it clear what organization is responsible for the contents of the page?
- How reputable is the source?
- Who is the author?
- What are the author's qualifications for writing on the subject?
- Is the information timely?
- Is factual information clearly delineated from opinions or speculation?
- When was the site created?
- When was the site last up-dated?
- Attempt to verify the information using other sources

Are there contact and source information?

- Does the site contain a phone number or postal address to contact for more information?
- Are the sources for any factual information clearly listed so they can be verified through another source?

Web pages can sometimes be susceptible to alternation.

- "Hackers" may alter the information—another important reason to verify the information using other sources

On the Web, distinctions between advertising, information, and entertainment can be extremely blurred.

- What are the goals/aims of the Web site?
- Is the information presented with a minimum of bias?
- Is the Web site trying to sell or promote a specific product or service?
- Is the information intended for entertainment?
- If there is advertising on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?

Kentucky Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs
KY TEACH Project



MCHB HRTW