

Criteria for Evaluating Resources (Internet- and Print-Based)

A³BCD

Authority of Source

- Is a personal or organizational author identified?
- Does the author provide contact information, e.g., e-mail address, telephone number, street address?
- Does the personal author provide any credentials...
 - organizational affiliation?
 - education?
 - occupation?
 - years of experience?
- Do the credentials suggest an inherent bias of particular point of view?
- Is the author the creator of the document or a compiler of information resources?
- Can you find other material by or about the author, either on the Internet or using library resources, e.g., reference materials or indexing publications?

Accuracy

- Are the sources of facts documented?
- Are there links to the documented sources?
 - Are the links relevant?
 - Do the links work or are they “broken”?
- Can you corroborate the facts, either using Internet sources or using library resources, e.g., reference materials or indexing publications?
- Has the author put in the effort to use good grammar and correct spelling?

Audience

- Who is the intended audience for this work?
 - General audience - written for people with an 8th - 12th grade education
 - Professional - written for those with an undergraduate college education
 - Specialized - written for those with an interest in a specialized area of study
- Is the language and the word selection understandable and appropriate for the intended readership? Is it too simple or too difficult?

Bias/Point of View

- What is the purpose of the document...
 - to inform/explain?
 - to persuade/advocate a position?
 - to sell?
- Does this reflect a particular bias in viewpoint?
- Who is the intended audience, e.g., professionals, students, consumers, advocates, etc.?
- Does this affect the scope or bias of the information presented?
- Does the author distinguish facts from opinions?
- Are sources or viewpoints missing that you might expect to be present?

Currency

- When was the document created and when was it last updated? (This is often specified at the end of the document.)

Design

- Do pages take a long time to load?
- Is the site well organized and logically arranged?
- Can you navigate the site without confusion?
- Is the text easy to read against the background?
- Are links helpful and relevant?
- Do graphics enhance (or distract from) the utility of the site?

Adapted from:

Smith, Alastair G. "Testing the Surf: Criteria for Evaluating Internet Information Resources." *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* 8, no. 3 (1997).

[<http://info.lib.uh.edu/pr/v8/n3/smit8n3.html>]

Webliographies of sites that discuss the evaluation of Internet resources

<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/~agsmith/evaln/evaln.htm>

Keith Stanger
Bruce T. Halle Library
Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
keith@stanger.com