CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING INFORMATION FOUND ON THE INTERNET

TO EVALUATE WEB SITE INFORMATION ASK: WHO – WHAT – WHEN – WHERE – AND WHY

WHO - ASCERTAIN AUTHOR OR PUBLISHER CREDENTIALS

✓ Have you heard of the author? Is he/she well known in the field?
✓ Can you find information about the author verifying credentials either online or in print?
✓ Is the site a personal page or blog, a page on an .edu site?
✓ Is there an email address listed to contact the author for additional information?
✓ Is there an About section to give you some of this information?

WHAT - OBJECTIVITY

Ascertaining bias or lack of objectivity is critical.

✓ Are the publishers of the site trying to sell you something?
✓ Are they trying to convert you to a specific point of view?

WHEN - CURRENCY

✓ Is there a relatively recent date of last update listed on the page?
✓ Check the data itself for currency. Is it still up-to-date and accurate?
✓ Are there many dead links on the site?

WHERE - PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Determine the Web site’s owners and sponsors, if any.

✓ Use the site’s About Us statement to find out what they say about themselves and their purpose in providing the information on the site.
✓ Use Whois, a database of domain registrations to determine who owns the website.

*Lack of objectivity does not mean substandard content, although it may indicate bias.*
WHY - VERIFY ALL INFORMATION - READ THE SITE DOCUMENTATION

✓ Look for the Data source
✓ Note differences between Web editions and print editions with the same or similar titles.
  • Note extent of editorial enhancements
  • Look for method of conversion from print to web.
  • Look for updating schedule and method.
✓ Note the individuals or organization responsible for the information supplied by the site.
✓ Confirm the document or information's completeness and accuracy.
✓ Find two or more credible sources that say the same thing.
✓ Evaluation of quality of information depends upon the background the searcher brings to his search. If you don't have an extensive background in the area in which you are seeking information, you need to verify your results by checking with other Web sites or print sources. Do they all agree?

Note -- The 5W theme was taken from http://kathyschrock.net/abceval/5ws.htm.