

FURTHER READING

Cornell University Libraries: *Evaluating Web Sites: Criteria and Tools.*
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/webeval.html>

Eduscapes. <http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic32.htm>

Offers many teaching resources, including a strong section on website evaluation and links to even more sites and articles on the topic.

Illinois Clicks. <http://www.illinoisclicks.org/browse?c=190>

Your portal to reliable information from the librarian community.

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. <http://21cif.imsa.edu/>
Includes various guides and tutorials. (Search website evaluation.)

Illinois School Library Media Association.

<http://www.islma.org/resources.htm#website>

Authority, accuracy, objectivity, coverage, and timeliness are the key components described and discussed.

Medical Library Association: *A User's Guide to Finding and Evaluating Health Information on the Web.*

<https://www.mlanet.org/resources/userguide.html>

National Library of Medicine: *MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing.*
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html>

Ohio State Universities Libraries: *Evaluating Web Sites.*

<http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/les1/index.html>

Includes a tutorial.

UCLA: *Hoax? Scholarly Research? Personal Opinion? You Decide!*

<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/hoax/index.htm>

Includes exercises designed to test your critical thinking skills.



Alliance Library System

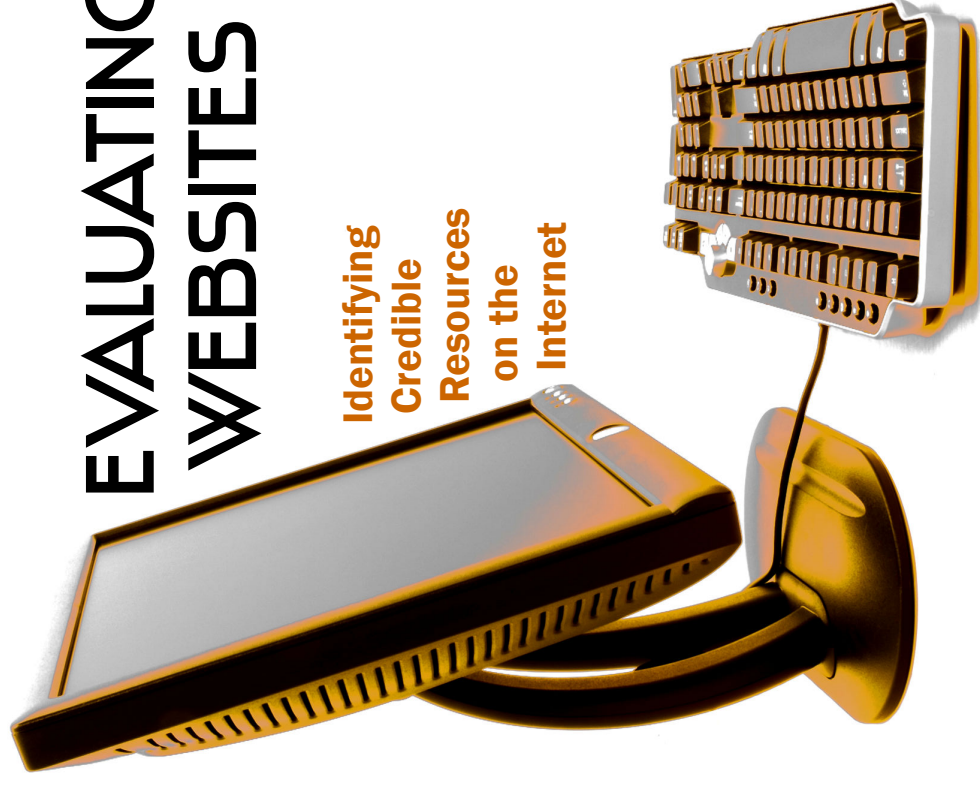
Consulting and Continuing Education

www.alliancelibrarysystem.com

(309) 694-9200

EVALUATING WEBSITES

Identifying
Credible
Resources
on the
Internet



Alliance Library System

INTRODUCTION

Websites number in the billions, making it challenging to find reliable, quality sites. The following elements, while taken alone do not a credible website make, together provide a solid tool for website evaluation. While surfing the web, examine websites for the following elements:

PURPOSE/COVERAGE

- ▶ What is the purpose of the website? Advocacy? News? Informational? Business/Marketing? Entertainment? Soapbox?
- ▶ Are the goals clearly stated?
- ▶ Does the site seem to contain complete information?
- ▶ Is there a better site available?
- ▶ If it is a medical or legal website, does it contain a disclaimer?
- ▶ Who is the intended audience? Third graders or doctoral level astrophysics students?

ACCURACY

- ▶ Does the website seem to be accurate? Anyone can have a website and say anything on it. Many sites contain inaccurate information. Some are spoof sites; some are just plain wrong. Websites are not reviewed systematically for accuracy; standards are non-existent.
- ▶ <http://www.dhmo.org> is an example of a spoof site.
- ▶ The faked Apollo moon landings website <http://www.ufos-aliens.co.uk/cosmicapollo.html> falls apart under scrutiny.
- ▶ Check out the following Mankato, Minnesota, site: <http://descy.50megs.com/mankato/mankato.html>.



AUTHORSHIP/SPONSORSHIP

- ▶ Who is the author? Is there an “about me” link where you can find out? <http://eduscapes.com/about.htm>
- ▶ What are the author’s qualifications?
- ▶ Is the site affiliated with a well-known organization or sponsor? If you are not familiar with the organization, is it cited in a source such as *Encyclopedia of Associations*? Has it been recognized by an organization with which you are familiar?
- ▶ Note: the tilde ~ identifies personal websites on .edu, .orgs, .coms, etc. <http://members.tripod.com/~tourete13/>
This fact does not render the site unreliable or non-authoritative, but it must be taken into consideration.

OBJECTIVITY/BIAS

- ▶ Is the author, sponsor, or organization biased?
- ▶ Does the site reflect one point of view or political, religious, or social agenda?
- ▶ Are there emotional “kicks” such as the overuse of emoticons or exclamation marks?
- ▶ Can you tell fact from opinion?

TIMELINESS

- ▶ How current is the information?
- ▶ When was the site or page last updated?
- ▶ Is it easy to tell to what a date refers? The entire website? A section of it?

NAVIGABILITY

- ▶ Is the website organized and logical?
- ▶ Is it easy to navigate and move between pages or do you get stranded?
- ▶ Does the site include an index or search box?