Evaluating Websites: A Checklist

Why evaluate websites? No one judges the quality or accuracy of information found on the World Wide Web before it is published, so you must evaluate what you find for yourself. Experts create some websites. For example, librarians who have expertise in the field of information science author the University of Maryland Libraries site. However, the many of World Wide Web sites are designed and authored by non-experts.

1. Authority and Accuracy
   Can you identify the author?
   Who is the author: ____________________________

   Can you identify the author's qualifications or expertise?
   □ Holds an advanced degree (Ph.D.)
   □ Is considered an expert in the field (Look at the biography or "about" section; what evidence do you have of expertise?) ____________________________
   □ Has the author been researching and writing on the topic for an extended period of time?

   What authorship clues does the URL (web address) provide?
   □ Company (.com)
   □ Academic institution (.edu)
   □ US government agency (.gov)
   □ US military site (.mil)
   □ Network of computer (.net)
   □ Non-profit organization (.org)
   □ Country-specific site (e.g., .uk)
   □ Personal web page (e.g., amyoliver.com)

2. Purpose and Content
   What is the purpose of the website? (Check all that apply.)
   □ A personal web page
   □ A company or organization web page
   □ A forum for scholarly/research information
   □ For entertainment
   □ An advertisement or electronic commerce
   □ A forum for ideas, opinions, or points of view
   □ Other

   What does this website provide?
   □ Balanced, objective, or factual information
   □ Blased, subjective, or opinionated statements
   □ Both objective and subjective information
   □ Contact Information

3. Design, Organization, and Ease of Use
   When was the website last revised, modified, or updated? ____________________________

   Is the website well maintained? Are there broken links? ____________________________

   In your opinion, how does the website appear overall? (Check all that apply.)
   □ Well designed and organized / Poorly designed and organized
   □ Easy to read and navigate / Difficult to read and navigate
   □ Help screens are available / Help screens are unavailable
   □ A search feature/site map is available / Search feature/site map is unavailable