Rio Salado College Library: Evaluating Web Sources

WHY is it important to evaluate Web sources?

- **ANYONE** can "publish" information on the Web.
- Unlike traditional print resources, Web resources rarely have editors or academic reviewers.
- **No standards exist to ensure accuracy on the World Wide Web.**

Criteria	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
URL/web address: (Authority) Before you leave the list of search results –before you click and get interested in anything written on the page – learn all you can from the URL.	What **domain** does it come from? Does the site or page represent a company, educational institution, hobbyist, organization, or government body?	Does the domain influence the content? • **Commercial sites:** look for .com • **Educational sites:** look for .edu • **Nonprofit organizations:** look for .org (though this is no longer restricted to nonprofits) • **Government sites:** look for .gov, .mil	Which domain is most appropriate for my research? ***Tip:** to limit your Web search by domain, simply type in the domain you want at the end of your search string using the following formula: **Your topic site:domain** *Example:* **Media bias site:edu** Try it!
Author/Source (Accuracy)	Who wrote this? Can the author of the page be determined? Where did he/she get the information?	Does the author have credentials? Is the author genuinely qualified to write on the topic, or is he/she a middle school student, hobbyist, self-proclaimed expert, or enthusiast? Are references provided?	Can you contact the author? Is the author affiliated with an organization or writing on behalf of him/herself?
Objectivity/ Purpose	Does the author have a bias or agenda? If so, how does the bias impact the usefulness of the information?	Why was the page put on the Web? • **To advance a cause?** • **To sell, entice?** • **To entertain?** • **To inform, give facts, provide data?** • **To explain, persuade?** Remember, the Web can be a "soapbox" for organizations or individuals.	What is the overall value of the content compared to the range of other resources on the topic? (e.g., reference books, articles from periodical databases provided by the library, etc.)
Currency	How current is the information? When was the page produced?	When was it last updated?	Are there a lot of "dead" or moved links?

Putting it all together

- **Authority.** Your page lists the author credentials and its domain is preferred (.edu, .gov, .org).
- **Accuracy.** Your page lists the author and institution that published the page and provides a way of contacting him/her.
- **Objectivity.** Your page provides accurate information with limited advertising and it is objective in presenting the information.
- **Currency.** Your page is current and updated regularly (as stated on the page) and the links (if any) are also up-to-date.