**Evaluating Information on the Web**

The 5 Ws – Who, What, Where, When, and Why

**Criteria** **What to Look for**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Who? = Authority  Who wrote the information? What are the author’s credentials? Who sponsors/publishes the site? Can I learn more about the sponsor of the site? | Author’s name, credentials, a biography and resume; phone or mailing address or means to contact the author (not just email); Look at the URL (.com, .edu, etc), and an “About” page |
| What? = Purpose  What information in presented? What is the purpose of the site? Is the information objective, complete? | An “About/Purpose” section to see the author’s stated purpose of the page; is the information presented objectively, can you detect any bias?  Find out if other web sites refer to this site. |
| Where? = Reliability  Where does the information come from? Are there links to reliable external web sites? Can I verify the source of the information? | Bibliographies, notes, or references; verify that links go to credible web sites. You should be able confirm info you find elsewhere too. |
| When? = Currency  Is the information presented actually current for the topic at hand? Has it been updated recently? | Last updated dates; whether the information presented seems outdated compared to other sources. |
| Why?  Why would you use this information over other information available? Does it fit your research goals? | Articulate what makes it better than other sources of information on the web for your purposes |

Based on Kathy Schrock’s 5 Five Ws of Web Site Evaluation http://kathyschrock.net/abceval/5ws.htm

**Sample Sites for Classroom Use**

<http://www.genpets.com>

<http://aim.org>

<http://webmd.com>

<http://drugs.com>

<http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/>

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/thimerosal.php>

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Resources**

http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P8\_4.php

**Additional Readings**

Head, Alison J. & Eisenberg, Michael B. (2010, November 1). Truth Be Told: How College Students Evaluate and Use Information in the Digital Age. Project Information Literacy Progress Report. University of Washington. Retrieved from <http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_Fall2010_Survey_FullReport1.pdf>

Iding, M.K., Crosby, M.E., Auernheimer, B., & Klemm, E.B. (2009). Web site credibility: Why do people believe what they believe? *Instructional Science*, 37(1), 43-63.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/1q4826801775ntq8/>

Lewandowski, Dirk, & Spree, Ulrike. (2011). Ranking of Wikipedia articles in search engines revisited: Fair ranking for reasonable quality? *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(1),117-132. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/asi.21423/abstract>

Ziming Liu. (2004). Perceptions of credibility of scholarly information on the web. *Information Processing & Management*, 40(6), 1027-1038.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0306-4573(03)00064-5>