WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF INFORMATION FOUND ON THE INTERNET?

Printed books, journals and newspapers employ editors and fact-checkers to verify that published information is accurate, trustworthy and credible. Generally speaking there is no editorial supervision of the Internet although producers of credible websites do monitor the quality of information posted on their sites. When using Internet resources, the burden of evaluating the quality of information falls on the researcher—You! Use the checklist below to evaluate the quality of a website.

AUTHORITY

- The author’s name or organization is prominently displayed. □ Yes □ No
  
  TIP: If not, look for an “About Us” or “Contact Us” link to learn more about the author.

- The author’s credentials and qualifications are provided. □ Yes □ No

- The URL ends in:
  
  □ .com (commercial) □ .org (non-profit organization)
  □ .edu (academic organization) □ .gov (U.S. government agency)
  □ .net (network-could be personal page) □ .uk, .ca, etc. (foreign country site)

  TIP: Looking at the domain name can give you clues about the authorship of the website. For example, government (.gov) and educational (.edu) sites provide reliable information whereas a commercial (.com) may not.

  TIP: The presence of a tilde (‘~’) in the URL indicates that it is a personal page.

NOTE: On June 19, 2011, ICANN, the international organization that administers domain names, loosened rules regarding the composition of domain names so that organizations can apply to have their URLs end in characters or words of their choosing (i.e., .school, .store, .pizza, etc.).
PURPOSE

- The purpose of this website is to:
  - ☐ Sell or advertise a product
  - ☑ Educate
  - ☐ Persuade to take a side on an issue
  - ☐ Provide a forum
  - ☐ Entertain
  - ☐ Provide a public service

TIP: Look for an “About Us” or “Mission Statement” link to find more information.

- The information presented is:
  - ☐ Balanced
  - ☐ Subjective
  - ☐ Supported with evidence
  - ☐ Factual
  - ☐ Objective
  - ☐ Opinionated or inflammatory

ACCURACY

- Source material integrated into the article/website is cited or credited. ☐ Yes ☐ No
- A bibliography or resources list is provided. ☑ Yes ☐ No
- There are no or very few spelling or grammatical errors. ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Links connect to pages containing reliable information. ☑ Yes ☐ No
- Other comparable sites contain the same information. ☐ Yes ☐ No

TIP: Use Google to find websites that are similar to the site you are evaluating by typing “related:URL” in the search textbox and compare the information provided on each site.
**CURRENCY**

- The webpage provides a date when the site was last updated. □ Yes □ No
- A copyright (©) date is provided. □ Yes □ No
- The links on the site function and link to active web pages or resources. □ Yes □ No

TIP: Make certain that statistics and factual information is dated.

TIP: Look at the top or bottom of the screen for copyright dates and/or date the page was last updated.

**RECOGNITION**

- Other credible and reputable sites link to this site. □ Yes □ No

TIP: Use Google to find websites that link to the site you are evaluating by typing “link:URL” in the search textbox, then evaluate those sites for quality, accuracy and timeliness.

**OTHER FEATURES TO CONSIDER**

- The website contains advertising. □ Yes □ No
- The website is well designed and easy to navigate. □ Yes □ No
- The website is restricted to subscribers? Fees are charged? □ Yes □ No