Evaluating Websites

Center for Writing
CWC
& Communication
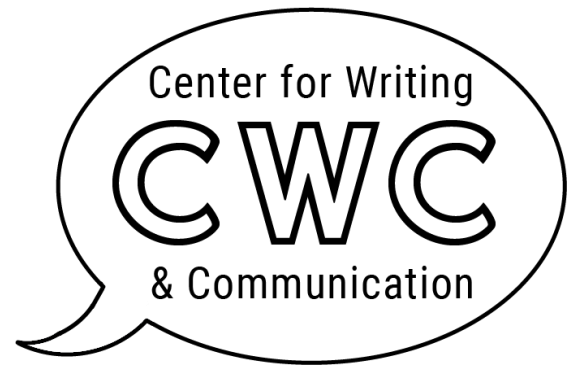
Anyone with a computer and access to server space can put up a web page. Thus, in order to do effective research and publish responsibly on the Web, researchers and authors need to investigate and critically approach the author's intentions, credibility, bias, the reliability of the information presented, and the ease with which the site can be navigated.
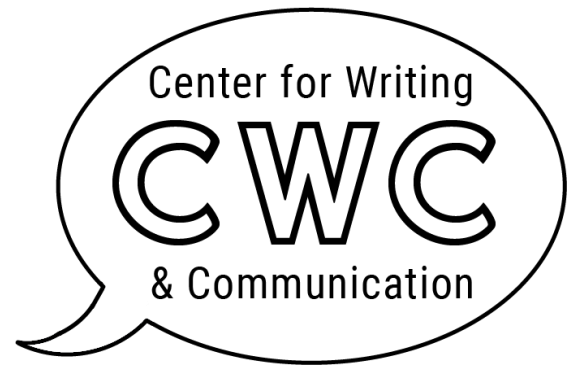

Author/Credibility

• Who is the author or producer?

• What is the authority or expertise of the individual or group that created the site?

• With what organization is the author of the site affiliated?

• What is the bias of the author/producer/organization?

• What are the reasons to assume that the author is an authority on the subject?

• Is there a way to contact the author or supply feedback?

Reliability of Information

• Who is the expected audience? Are the content and links   clearly described and suitable for the expected audience?

• What is the primary purpose of the site (e.g., advertising, info)?

• Is a date of publication provided? When was the site last   revised?

• How complete and accurate are the info and links provided?

• Are excerpts from texts provided or are entire texts   available on the site?

• Does the info contradict something you already know or have learned from another source?

• Is a bibliography of resources included?

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Navigating the Site

• Is the site easy to navigate? Is it user-friendly?

• How up-to-date are the links? Do they all work?

• Do parts of it take too long to load?

• Does this site contain links to other resources?

Reputable Sources

• Sites ending in .edu and .gov tend to offer more reliable information. However, this is not a maxim. These sites need to be subjected to the same level of scrutiny as .com's and .org's.

• UCA's library site is your best bet and has several useful research databases on the Internet, accessible from any internet connection. The library has many search engines specially made to find reputable, professional articles, journals, etc. (like JSTOR and Wilson Web).

• Search engines like Yahoo and Google can be helpful, but be wary of your source.

• Electronic versions of sources that are also printed, such as academic, peer-reviewed journals, tend to be more reliable.

• Crosscheck all information not found in a journal.

• Don't be shy! Ask your professors what they feel are reputable sites.