

# O'GRADY LIBRARY

## SAINT MARTIN'S UNIVERSITY

### Evaluating Internet & Web Information

When evaluating sites on the Internet, and particularly those found on the Web, be mindful that there is no central authority governing the available material. In other words, there is **no assurance of quality**. Any individual or organization can share information electronically by publishing it on the Internet or on the Web. Finding inaccurate, incomplete and out of date materials is always a possibility. The majority of the information you will find reflects people's ideas and opinions, or is commercial in nature. It is up to you to evaluate the information you find, and determine whether it is accurate and reliable. In other words you need to separate the junk from the gems.

### Evaluation Criteria

- Authority:** Who wrote or produced the information?  
Is the author the original creator of the information?  
What makes them an authority on the subject?  
Do they list their credentials, education or experience?  
Are they accredited or endorsed by a reputable organization?  
Does the article contain footnotes or a bibliography?  
Do they credit their sources of information?  
Is contact information for the author made available?  
Is the information linked to a sponsoring organization?  
Is there a copyright statement attached to the information?
- Scope:** Who is the intended audience for the information?  
What is the purpose of the information?  
What time period is covered?  
What geographical area is covered?  
Is there a cultural bias (i.e. Western European, Christian)?
- Accuracy:** Are the sources for factual information clearly listed so that those facts can be verified in another source?  
Is the information free of grammatical, spelling and other typographical errors?  
Is it clear who has the ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the material?  
If statistical data is presented in graphs and/or charts, are they clearly labeled and easy to read?
- Objectivity:** Is any sort of bias evident in the material or through the page design?  
Is the information provided as a public service or is the sponsor trying to sell a product or service?  
Is the information free of advertising?  
If there is advertising on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?  
Do you have to enter personal information in order to proceed?  
Does the page have a corporate sponsor?

- Currency:** Are dates included with the information that indicate:  
    When the information or page was written?  
    When the information was first placed on the Internet or Web?  
    When the information was last revised?  
Are there any other indications that the information is kept current?  
If material is presented in graphs and/or charts, is it clearly stated when the data was gathered?  
In web pages how up to date are the links?  
How reliable are the links, are there blind links or dead-ends, or references or links to sites that have moved?
- Coverage:** Is there an indication that the site has been completed?  
Or is the site still under construction?  
If there is a print equivalent to the information, is there a clear indication of whether the entire work or only a portion of the work is being presented?  
If the material is taken from a work that is no longer under copyright (i.e. a dictionary or thesaurus) has there been an effort to update the material to make it current?

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