

# THE ABC'S OF EVALUATING WEB SITES



Learning Resource Center

## AUTHORITY

Who created the site? What are the author's or producer's qualifications/affiliations? Is the author affiliated with a group that might have a "vested interest" in the topic? Is there any contact information?

Who is the sponsoring group? What is the group's purpose (inform, persuade or advocate, sell, inflame)? Is this an official or unofficial site?

What type of web site is it?

**.edu** (educational): Colleges and universities. Fairly reliable, especially if information about the author is included.

**.gov** (government): Federal government sites.

**.org** (organization): Often non-profits but may also be advocacy groups pushing a particular attitude, opinion, or viewpoint.

**.com** (commercial): Anyone can get one. Be cautious in using these. Confirm the information somewhere else.

~ (personal page): May be part of a larger organization or stand alone. Use caution.

Did you locate this site through an online "guide" or via a keyword search? Has this site been recognized by others as reliable via links from other sites?

**Tips:** Look for a resume, biographical statement, "About the author" statement, or link to background information. Check other Library resources for material about or by the author. Follow the links back to the host site's page or enter the URL for the top level domain for information on the sponsoring group. Search for other sites which have linked to this page. In Google, this can be done via "link:URL" (e.g. link:lii.org).

## BIAS

Is the information balanced, reflecting both sides of an issue, or is it biased toward one side, misleading, or advocating a cause?

Does it use "loaded" words?

Are controversial claims substantiated with verifiable facts?

**Tips:** Check for supporting evidence or documentation for any claims made. Pay careful attention to the tone of the writing.

## CURRENCY

When was the site created? When was it last updated?

If the site has links, are they still current? Do they still work?

Can you tell if the information is still current (e.g. up-to-date statistics)?

**Tip:** Look for creation/revision dates. If none is on the site, try using "View->Page Info" on your browser's drop-down menu.

## CONTENT

Is there a statement of mission or purpose?

How detailed and accurate is the information?

Are references or a bibliography included?

Can you easily navigate the site?

Are there links to other Web resources?

Does the text contain correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar?

Are the graphics appropriate and helpful?

Is the information what you need?

Is the level appropriate?

**Tips:** Examine any "About this site" information for indications of intent. Look for the Site Map, Index, or Table of Contents to find out what is there.

***When in doubt, check it out (in other sources).***