

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING (14.4)

1. Based upon careful attention to this argument's references, tone, and level of diction, create a one-page description of Miller's intended audience. Support your description with specific references to the text of the argument.
2. Read the May 16, 1994 *Newsweek* article referred to by Miller. Form a small discussion group in which each member shares his/her reactions to the *Newsweek* article. Record the views of the group members and write a two- to three-page factual argument summarizing the discussion.
3. Spend some time in a chat room of your choice, and then write a first-person factual argument reporting the experience.
4. Literature about the Internet is filled with predictions of gloom and glory about its effects on virtually every facet of human experience. Using only electronic resources, write a five-page causal argument predicting the Internet's impact on one of the following (or on an area supplied by your instructor):
 - gender equity
 - consumer greed
 - recreational time
 - relationships
 - children's values

Include a bibliography of sources, following the Internet-diction formal suggested by MLA or APA.

INFORMATION LITERACY: THE WEB IS NOT AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

This page from The University of Maryland's Web site serves a dual purpose in this book. First, it exemplifies an argument of recommendation. Second, its content—the cautions and recommendations regarding the World Wide Web—are suitable to anyone who uses the Web as a research tool.

In this Information Age it is important to pay attention to issues of information literacy in traditional, media, and computing arenas. I use the term information literacy to mean the ability of people to:

- know when they need information
- find information
- evaluate information
- process information
- use information to make appropriate decisions in their lives

The Internet has added a new dimension to traditional information literacy issues—es-

information base and providing more accurate and timely information at the "click of a mouse," it also means, perhaps, more intellectual effort on the part of the information consumer to develop valuable critical thinking skills and to evaluate the sources, quality, and quantity of that information. It also means serious attention should be paid to intellectual property and appropriate use issues.

The Web is not a huge book written by multiple authors. There is no definitive table of contents for the Web and no definitive index. To some it seems more like a giant reference collection.

While it is true that many fine reference materials are available on the Web, it is not an encyclopedia. Encyclopedias have subject experts writing refereed articles that pass through editors and style guides before publication. The Web has these same experts, and many non-experts, creating non-ordered webpages on a vast array of topics at a vast range of quality and depth. Some people consider the Web to be a digital library full of materials of varying quality and format.

The Web is not one large digital library. Librarians have trained professionals who carefully evaluate, select, organize, and index materials from credible sources.

The Web IS an electronic repository for books, data collections, encyclopedias, libraries, AND any disparate piece of text, graphic, or sound byte that someone chose to put on-line. And some of it is inaccurate, biased, out-of-date, shallow, and inappropriate for academic use.

In evaluating information on the Internet, one should consider many of the same elements that would be considered when selecting resource material in other formats, and a new one: permanence. As when judging any kind of publication, much is subjective. However, keeping the following elements in mind will assist users to identify resources of value to meet their information needs.

- Scope
- Authority and Bias
- Accuracy
- Timeliness
- Permanence

Value Added Features

Information Literacy Issues:

Content Scope

Evaluate the scope of the site
Identifying the scope of material presented is the basic breadth and depth question of what's covered and in what detail. The scope should reflect the purpose of the site and its intended audience. Evaluating scope includes reviewing topical aspects of a subject, on which the site is focused and noting if there are any key omissions from the subject areas.

Many Web sites have abstract levels of current information but no archives or information in depth. Users should look for specific information included on the web site that describes the intended scope and audience. If this information is not available, and it usually is not, one can look for clues in key headings and follow links to estimate the scope of the material.

- Is there a stated purpose of the site
- Who is the intended audience for the site
- Are there statements of scope and any limitations which may apply
- What is the site's comprehensiveness

Authority and Bias

Evaluate the authority and bias of the Internet site
Sometimes it is very difficult to discover who actually provided the information available at a Web site. One can always check if the site is officially mandated by an organization or institution. Is it an individual's page or is it institutionally supported? Was it created by a subject area expert or by an undergraduate student doing a class project?

Checking the publisher of the information may be helpful. Sites in the edu (education) or gov (government) domains have often built important databases in specific topic areas and/or have public information and services available on-line. Sites in the .com (commercial) and .org (organization)

domains are usually product or a product or a product. Bias can be furthering a F and in any d prevalent in on Email, web tions provide: Electronic or may provide v thors between Informal net. thortative ref Things to

- Who provides the information
- What are the organizational goals
- Is the information current
- Can you verify the information
- For whom is the information intended

Informative

Evaluate the
Unless you a particular tell if it in measure it topic in a found a th chosen for you judge It is he that is ref tent. It m bibliotec one thout link to it, wide link with hae Thing

- Is the information current
- Is the information relevant
- Is the information accurate
- Is the information complete

domains are usually selling something—a product or a point of view.

Bias can be introduced in any Web site furthering a political or social philosophy and in any domain, however. It is most prevalent in organization Web sites (org).

Email, web chats, threaded conversations, provide special cases for consideration. Electronic communication in these formats may provide valuable archives of conversations between or from experts, but does the informal nature lessen its value as an authoritative reference?

Things to look for:

- Who provided the information and why
- What credentials do they have
- Is the provider affiliated with a known organization
- Is a point of view being "sold" to the user
- Can you find explicit statements or authority—such as a statement of institutional support
- For "advocacy" pages see *Checklist for an Advocacy Web Page* from Widener University.

Information Literacy Issues: Accuracy

Evaluate the accuracy of the site

Unless you already have a base knowledge of a particular field and its experts, how do you tell if information is "good"? One way is to measure it against information on the same topic in other formats. Or you may have found a rich source of information on your chosen topic by following a link from a page you judge to contain accurate information.

It is helpful to know if you are at a site that is referenced by other sites for its content. It may not be a citation in a printed bibliography, but it may mean that someone thought well enough of it to provide a link to it. Not many institutional sites provide links to badly constructed websites with inaccurate information.

Things to look for:

- Is the topic appropriate for the site
- Is the source of the information clearly posted

Who is the author/creator/publisher and what are his/her/their credentials

Are there references from other resources on the same or related topics

Has the site been reviewed by a professional organization or your peers

Information Literacy Issues: Timeliness

Evaluate the timeliness of the site

Printed media is often considered to be out of date before it reaches its audience. Some data gathered by electronic means can be displayed immediately on the Internet while other information was translated from printed materials that already fit the "out of date" description. If a government manual is on-line, it can be edited within minutes of new policy implementation, but was it?

With the exception of archival information, all sources should be checked for currency. Email sent to a Listserv is dated. Many websites post the date and, sometimes, the time of the last modification to the information. This may be included in a stated policy for the site or be given on individual files. Sometimes you will find relevant information in a document header or footer. This may help you determine if you revisit the site in the future for additional or newer information.

Things to look for:

- Posting and revision dates
- Policy statements for information maintenance
- Link maintenance—do the hyperlinks work?

Information Literacy Issues: Permanence

Evaluate the permanence of the site

Here today and gone tomorrow! There is no guarantee that a particular file of information will reside in the same location today that it did yesterday. On the Internet, files move from server to server, undergo on-line editing or deletion, and otherwise change their form and/or their location routinely. It is important to note the date and time that a

site is visited if one plans to use the information and a citation is taken. In some cases, the researcher may wish to download, or otherwise capture the file or the section of the file being cited, for on-site reference.

Things to look for:

- Explicit statements of temporary or changing location of servers or files
- Author's relationship to the server infrastructure
- Permanent or transitory nature of the information

Information Literacy Issues: Value Added Features

Evaluate any "Value Add" service of the site

What can be considered a valuable addition to a Web site? Generally, anything that helps the user find the information needed. Here are some examples: Web sites moderated by trained professionals who receive and respond to feedback, evaluation or rating of informational content or presentation on this or other sites; provision of text-only formats; search engines, navigational and help tools.

Things to look for:

- Evidence of a content manager with appropriate credentials
- Clear navigation bars
- Index and/or search facilities
- Descriptions of site structure beyond the table or contents (site maps)

- About or help information
- Summaries or abstracts
- Rating and/or evaluations
- Feedback mechanisms

Information and Organization

Evaluate the presentation and organization of the site

Presentation issues include page or site layout, clarity or inaccessibility of the site's organizational design, and help/example sections. Presentation issues may, or may not, impact the information provided. If a citation of the source means that others will visit the site, the citation should be annotated to include information about the site presentation and organization. If a site is very difficult to use, it might be better to not use it as a reference.

Things to look for:

- Intuitive site organization for the appropriate audience
- Clear headings and textual references
- Appropriate use of graphics and multimedia
- Help and example sections appropriately placed
- Navigational links provided back to starting points or table of content pages

Source: "Information Literacy: The Web Is Not An Encyclopedia." <http://www.inform.umcd.edu/libinfo/literacy/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The URL for this Web site is <http://www.inform.umcd.edu/libinfo/literacy/>. Find the site and determine, based upon the cautions and recommendations contained in the article, the reliability of the source.
2. What is the purpose of the initial bulleted definition? To introduce? To interrogate? To argue? What in the rest of the article leads you to this conclusion?
3. This Web site is essentially a set of recommendations for getting the most out of the World Wide Web as an information resource. Working from what you learned in Chapter 9 on writing arguments of recommendation, discuss, with two or three of your classmates, the effectiveness of the recommendations.
4. Find three or four other college or university Web sites with similar pages on using the WWW (hint: check your school's library link). How similar are the principles and recommendations included in these sites to those presented here?

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Using the information you gathered from the reading, write a paper on the topic of information literacy.
2. Select a topic and write a paper on it.
3. Write a paper on the topic of information literacy.
4. Write a paper on the topic of information literacy.

"Pod of Corgi" *magazine* from *Don't miss it!* as *it* nice offer

The July 1st issue of the magazine is available for purchase. So, please visit the site to see the price and to purchase it. The magazine is available for purchase at the following URL: <http://www.inform.umcd.edu/libinfo/literacy/>