**EVALUATING INTERNET SITES AND RESOURCES**

     Access to Internet resources opens a vast amount of information to faculty and students but it also brings new evaluation responsibilities.  The Internet has much to offer but users must assume responsibility for judging quality and truthfulness.

     Unlike printed journals and magazines, there is no "filtering" mechanism such as peer review or editing for materials on the Internet.  Internet resources are simply made available by anyone who wishes, with no selection process or criteria.  Accurate, reliable information may share the screen with information that is inaccurate, incomplete, or even intentionally false.  In contrast, resources provided by C. T. Ryan Library have been specifically chosen by either a librarian or a faculty member who believed them to be reliable and of high quality.

     Criteria listed below will help in assessing an Internet site's quality.

[Authority and Authorship](http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/gov_doc/about/index.php?id=8490#Authority_and_Authorship)     [Accuracy](http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/gov_doc/about/index.php?id=8490#Accuracy)     [Objectivity](http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/gov_doc/about/index.php?id=8490#Objectivity)    [Currency](http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/gov_doc/about/index.php?id=8490#Currency)     [Coverage](http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/gov_doc/about/index.php?id=8490#Coverage)

**Authority and Authorship**

* Is it clear who is sponsoring the page?  Is there a link to a page describing the purpose of the sponsoring organization?  Is this organization recognized in the field being researched?  Is it logical that this organization would address this subject?  Does affiliation with this organization bias the information?  Do you need to look further to balance the information you have found?
* Did you link to this document from another document that you trust?
* Is it clear who wrote the material?  Are the author's qualifications for writing on this topic clearly stated (occupation, experience, position, education)?  Is the author well known in this field?  (Was the author recommended by a faculty member or other expert?)
* Is the author affiliated with an institution?  Would this affiliation in any way bias the information or does it add credibility?

***For assistance:***  Ask a Librarian at the Reference Desk; many biographical resources are available, though not every person who puts up a Web page has biographical information written about them.  Information can also be found about organizations and institutions.  Online help is available 24/7 from the Library's Question Point Reference Service:  <http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/ref/index.php?id=36928>

**Accuracy**

* Do you have enough background information from reliable sources to tell if what you found fits with what is accepted on the topic?
* Are sources for factual information clearly stated so they can be verified in other sources?  Is there a bibliography?
* Does the information seem based on opinion or belief rather than research?
* Is the information presented free of grammatical, spelling, or other typographical errors?  Errors indicate a lack of quality control and can produce inaccurate information.
* Who has ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the content? Does it say?
* Is statistical data clearly labeled and easy to read?
* Are the links reliable (no blind links or sites which have moved)?

***For assistance:***  Ask a Librarian at the Reference Desk for standard sources in your field.  Online help is available 24/7 from the Library's Question Point Reference Service:  <http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/ref/index.php?id=36928>

**Objectivity**

* Is the author impartial and objective?  Is there an obvious bias?
* Is the author trying to persuade you to take some kind of action?
* Is it free of advertising?
* If there is advertising, is it clearly differentiated from informational content?

**Currency**

* Are there dates on the page to indicate when it was written?  When was the page last revised?
* Are there other indications that the material is kept current?
* If charts or graphs are present, is it clearly stated when the data was gathered?
* If the information was published in different editions, is the page clearly labeled to indicate which edition it is from?

**Coverage**

* Is the page completed and not still under construction?
* If there is a print equivalent to the Web page, is there a clear indication that the entire work is available on the Web and not just parts of it?
* If the information is from an older work, has any effort been made to update it?

***For assistance:***  Ask for help at the Reference Desk. Librarians can direct you to other resources that will help evaluate information found on the Internet.  Online help is available 24/7 from the Library's Question Point Reference Service:  <http://www.unk.edu/acad/library/ref/index.php?id=36928>

***Remember:***  There is no archive of information on the Web.  Sites can disappear or change from one day to the next.  Print out a copy of any information you intend to cite.

***For more information:*** Additional information about evaluating various types of Web sites is  from Lesley University Library:  <http://lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html>