

The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

or,
Why It's a Good Idea to Evaluate Web Sources

Examples

Criteria

Suggestions

Bibliography



Last updated on

by

[Susan E. Beck](#)

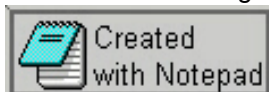
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in July, 1997 for the [Institute for Technology-Assisted Learning](#), at the [New Mexico State University](#)

Evaluation Criteria

[||Accuracy](#) | [Authority](#) | [Objectivity](#) | [Currency](#) | [Coverage](#) ||

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I. Accuracy

- Is the information [reliable and error-free](#)?
- Is there an editor or someone who verifies/checks the information?

Rationale

1. Anyone can publish anything on the Web
2. Unlike traditional print resources, web resources rarely have editors or fact-checkers
3. Currently, no web standards exist to ensure accuracy

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II. Authority

- Is there an author? [Is the page signed](#)?
- Is the [author qualified? An expert](#)?
- [Who is the sponsor](#)?
- Is the [sponsor of the page reputable? How reputable](#)?
- Is there a [link to information about the author or the sponsor](#)?
- If the page includes neither a signature nor indicates a sponsor, [is there any other way to determine its origin](#)?

Look for a header or footer showing affiliation.
Look at the URL. *http://www.fbi.gov*
Look at the domain. *.edu, .com, .ac.uk, .org, .net*

Rationale

1. See number 1 above
2. It's often hard to determine a web page's authorship
3. Even if a page is signed, qualifications aren't usually given
4. Sponsorship isn't usually indicated

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III. Objectivity

- Does the [information show a minimum of bias](#)?
- Is the [page designed to sway opinion](#)?
- Is there any [advertising on the page](#)?

Rationale

1. Frequently the goals of the sponsors/authors aren't clearly stated.
2. Often the Web serves as a virtual "Hyde Park Corner", a soapbox.

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IV. Currency

- Is the [page dated](#)?
- If so, [when was the last update](#)?
- How [current are the links](#)? Have some expired or moved?

Rationale

1. Publication or revision dates not always provided.
2. If a date is provided, it may have various meanings. For example,
 - It may indicate when the material was first written
 - It may indicate when the material was first placed on the Web
 - It may indicate when the material was last revised

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V. Coverage

- What [topics are covered](#)?
- What does [this page offer that is not found elsewhere](#)?
- What is [its intrinsic value](#)?
- How [in-depth is the material](#)?

Rationale

1. Web coverage often differs from print coverage
2. Frequently, it's difficult to determine the extent of coverage

3. Sometimes web information is just-for-fun or outright silliness

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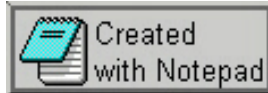
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