

Lake-Sumter Community College Library
Evaluating Web Resources
<http://www.lsc.edu/library/resguid.htm#evalweb>

The Internet is an important source for a variety of information resources. At the same time, creating and mounting a webpage is so easy and inexpensive that almost anyone can do it. Books, journals and other resources found in academic or research libraries and subscription databases have been evaluated and edited by scholars, publishers and librarians. Few Web pages go through a process of editing, peer review, or library selection, so the quality of Web resources is much less predictable.

Types of Sites

The first step in evaluating material found on a website is to consider who is responsible for the site and for individual pages on it. Start by looking at the address, also called the URL (Uniform Resource Locator). The URL is made up of several parts. The ones in **bold** are always present.

http://	www	.lsc	.edu	/library	/libcat.htm
Protocol	3 rd level domain	2nd level domain	Top level domain (TLD)	Directory (may be more than one)	File. File type

The chart below shows the most-used top level domains and who is most often responsible for them.

Type of Site	Domain	Author/Features	Notes and Examples
Education	.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pages maintained by a college or university, faculty and students 	Some community colleges use cc.state.us: http://lbcc.cc.ca.us
US government US military	.gov .mil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly informational May be objective or reflect the biases of those in power 	US state and local government sites often use the local abbreviation and .gov or .us: http://www.ca.gov or http://www.state.ri.us
Inter-governmental	.int	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations established by treaties between governments 	http://www.nato.int or http://www.who.int
Business or commercial organizations	.com .biz .aero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often promoting a product or service May include corporate information and product help .aero is for aerospace only 	Most news sites are .com's – they may be a little more current but also a little less reliable than their print or broadcast equivalents because they respond to events more quickly
Cooperatives	.coop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit businesses 	Lots of credit unions and agriculture coops
Non-profit organizations	.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes charities and advocacy 	Verify facts presented against other resources
Museums	.museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museums and members of museum profession 	Many still use .org or other TLD's
Networks	.net	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originally Internet service providers, now anyone 	Include pages by a variety of authors
Information	.info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be anyone 	
Personal Web pages	Various including .name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be difficult to determine the author's credentials 	/~name usually indicates a personal page on a larger site: http://home.earthlink.net/~jjones113.htm
Sites from other countries use postal abbreviations	.uk .mx .jp etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> .us follows state for state and local govt. sites: http://state.me.us Non-US country codes may be preceded by another top level domain: http://www.totalfootball.com.fr or http://www.oxfam.org.uk Sometimes. ac (for academic) is used instead of .edu: http://www.cam.ac.uk 	

Evaluating the Web Page

After determining the type of site, the next step is to evaluate the site or specific page for your particular need. The table below provides a checklist of the factors that should be considered.

Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Who is the author? ✓ Are the author's qualifications provided? ✓ Is the site sponsored by an organization? If so, is the purpose and scope of the organization given? ✓ Does the author or sponsoring organization have the credentials or expertise to present information on the topic? ✓ Have others, either in print media or electronic sources, cited the author? ✓ Is there an "about this site" link or information provided about the purpose of the site? ✓ Does the author comply with current copyright guidelines? ✓ Is contact information provided? Does the site include a phone number and a surface mail address as well as an e-mail address?
Bias & Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does the information seem to be credible and reliable? ✓ Does it appear that the author or sponsoring organization has a biased point of view? If so, is the bias clearly stated? ✓ Are there advertisements on the page? Is the page actually an advertisement disguised as information? ✓ Are fallacious, misleading or deceptive arguments used? ✓ Are stereotypes or ethnocentric arguments used? ✓ Are there links to information sources with other viewpoints? ✓ Is the page a satire, parody or spoof?
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is the content accurate, authentic, not forged or altered? ✓ Is the writing clear and precise? ✓ Who is the intended audience and is the content suitable for that group? ✓ Are there citations for sources, indicating where the information was gathered? ✓ Are there links to other sources? ✓ Does the information agree with other sources? ✓ Are there many obvious typographical or grammatical errors?
Consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How does the Web page compare with others on the same subject? ✓ How does the Web page compare with print sources or other electronic sources on the same topic? ✓ Does the information presented agree or disagree with an accepted point of view?
Currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How current is the information? ✓ Is the purpose of the site to provide current information or primarily for historical purposes? ✓ Is the information too old or too new for your research needs? ✓ When was the page (or site) created or last revised? ✓ Are there links that have moved or are not connecting?
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is the site organized such that information is easy to find? ✓ Is the site searchable? ✓ Is the site still under construction?