WEB EVALUATION CRITERIA

I. 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 sponsor?
- ❖ If no signature or indication of sponsorship is given, is there any other way to determine who is responsible? (Look at the domain and other clues in the URL. ex: http//www.fbi.gov)
    - Rationale
    1. Anyone can publish anything on the web.
    2. Authors and sponsors are frequently not indicated.
    3. Even if a page is signed, qualifications aren't normally given.

II. Accuracy

- ❖ Is the information reliable and error-free?
- ❖ Are there any obvious indicators or signs of error?
- ❖ Is there an editor or someone who verifies or checks the information?
    - Rationale
    1. Anyone can publish anything on the web.
    2. Unlike traditional print resources, web pages rarely have editors or factcheckers.
    3. Currently, no standards exist to ensure accuracy on web pages.

III. Coverage

- ❖ What topics are covered?
- ❖ What does this page offer that is not found elsewhere?
- ❖ What is the 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.

IV. 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 public forum, where groups and individuals broadcast their beliefs and opinions.

V. Currency
- ❖ Is the page dated?
- ❖ If so, when was the last update?
- ❖ How current are the links? Have some expired or moved?
    - Rationale
    1. The web is such a dynamic resource that information is quickly outdated and links can move overnight or quickly expire.
    2. Publication or revision updates are not always provided.
    3. If a date is provided, it may have various meanings. For example, a date may indicate when the material was first written, when it was placed on the web, or when it was last revised. Always look for a word of phrase that explains the date given.

VI. Navigation
- ❖ Does the page take a long time to load?
- ❖ Does the page have an easy to understand organizational scheme?
- ❖ Are the links clearly visible?
- ❖ Are the links intuitive?
- ❖ Are there software or browser requirements that limit access to critical information?
    - Rationale
    1. Form and content go hand in hand; if you can't read the screen easily, you will have difficulty understanding the page.
    2. When a website is poorly organized or difficult to navigate, it is hard to appreciate the site's content.
    3. If the site is frequently unavailable, this may indicate future problems.
    4. Why trust a website that confuses or makes special demands of its users?

Bibliography

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