Library & Knowledge Service

Quick Guide To
Evaluating Web Resources

Why should I evaluate web resources?

- Anyone can publish information on the web (internet)
- There are no official moderators or standards for web content or search engines
- Online resources are constantly changing
- Information you find online may be illegal, inaccurate, out of date or biased

How can I evaluate online resources?

You can evaluate online (web) resources by thinking about the following points:

Relevance – Is the site relevant to your research?
- Are you looking for information about people belonging to a particular age group, gender or place of origin?
- Is the information aimed at a particular audience or level of expertise? Use of technical language assumes knowledge of the subject area and can indicate the audience the information is aimed at.
- Is the information presented in an accessible format? Is it easy to search?

Authority - Who has produced the information?

- Is it an organisation or an individual person?
- Are they a recognised authority/expert on the subject?
- Is there a way to contact them?
- Are the sources of any information or statistics acknowledged?
- Is the information only an extract of a wider piece of research?
- Has the site been linked to by other quality web sites?

Objectivity - Is the information biased in any way?

- Does the information present a balanced view, or does it only give one opinion?
- What is the main purpose of the information? To inform? To sell a product? Does it feature any adverts?

Accuracy

- **Are the aims of the site clear?** What is it for? Who is it for?
- **Does the site achieve its aims?** Does it do what it says it will do?
- **Is the information accurate?** For example, check that the arguments are supported with independent evidence.
- **Is the author qualified to write the information?** Has anyone else said the same things anywhere else? If the information is new, is there any proof?
- **When was the site produced and is it up to date?** When was the information published? Is the site still current? Links that don't work or typographical errors may indicate a lack of accuracy in the content and a lack of maintenance of the site.

What is a URL?

A **URL** (**U**niform **R**esource **L**ocator), also known as a **web address** or **domain name**, is a unique string of characters that specifies the location of an online resource e.g. website, image, video etc.

It is made up of several components which give clues about what sort of website you are viewing. Knowing what these components mean can help you to decide how useful a web resource is.

https://www.merseywestlancs.nhs.uk/

Protocol: This indicates the method used to display the web page.

Domain: This is the main address of the website and is usually the name of the business or organisation.

Sub Domain: The most common is WWW. However it is also used to specify the type of resource that the browser should deliver e.g. blog, video etc.

Top Level Domain: The first part specifies the kind of organisation the site belongs to. The second part shows where in the world the site actually is.

The ending of a **URL (Top Level Domain)** can give you clues about what kind of organisation it belongs to. Below are examples of some top level domains that you might recognise and what they indicate:

- **.nhs.uk –** UK National Health Service
- **.co.uk –** UK commercial site
- **.com –** Commercial site, often a US company but can be from anywhere in the world
- **.gov.uk –** UK government
- **.org.uk –** UK non-profit
- **.ac.uk –** UK academic institution
- **.edu –** US academic institute

Contact us

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