Evaluating Websites

Websites can be an important part of the research process, but it is important to evaluate a website you plan to use for academic research to determine the credibility of the information it contains. You can use the questions Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How to evaluate websites.

1. Who?
   - Who is the author? What do you know or what can you find out about the author? Is the author qualified to write about this topic?
   - If you cannot find information about who is responsible for the website, it can be a sign that the website may not be a credible source of information.

2. What?
   - What kind of evidence supports the information on the website? Are the citation, hyperlinks, or footnotes?
   - Can you verify the information presented on the website in other sources?

3. When?
   - When was the website or the information published? Has it been updated?
   - Is the information current enough for the topic? For example, an article published minutes after an event occurs may be missing some information found in later publications.

4. Where?
   - Where was the information published? What do you know or what can you find out about the parent website?
   - Is there an “About Us” section of the website?
   - Can you find an outside evaluation of the website?
   - What is the domain of the parent website? An .edu or .org domain can be one indication of credibility, but should never be the only factor you consider.

5. Why?
   - Why did the author write and publish this information? Is it based on opinions, research, or both?
   - Why was this information published on this website?
   - Do you detect any bias in the article or information? In the parent website?

6. How?
   - How is the information presented?
   - Is the website easy to navigate?
   - Are the advertisements on the website?
   - Can you easily distinguish between content and advertisements?
   - Do you have to pay for any of the information? How much and to whom?

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