

### Guideline for Evaluating & Selecting Internet Resources

The Internet can offer useful information, from websites of organizations to websites containing free resources such as e-books and e-journals. However this information must be carefully selected and evaluated. The following are the criterion to evaluate and select Internet resources: audience and purpose, the source (i.e. reputation and reliability of the source), content and accuracy, authorship, comprehensiveness, currency, connectivity, and availability.

- ✚ **Audience and purpose:** consider the audience and purpose of the Internet resource. Identify the audience based on content, tone or style. It is important to relate the -resource to curricular development of UM (some other subjects with interest to local community or knowledge development may be selected, but the focus should remain on the UM curricular development).
- ✚ **Consider the source:** search engines or web guides often produce hundreds to thousands of Internet resources, from ads to full-text, to scholarly documents. It is important to evaluate the reputation and reliability of sources (e.g., some of Internet resources might be of poor quality, i.e. not written by renowned authors, not written in a good academic style, or unstable). Internet personal pages are not necessarily “bad”, but it is important to investigate their origin carefully. There are some strategies to determine an Internet resource appropriateness as an information source:
  - Is there an author of the document? Can the producer’s credentials be determined?
  - Read the URL carefully: look for a person’s name (e.g., gpomberger or pomberger) following a tilde, a percent sign (%), or the words "users," "members," or "people."
  - Is there a date on the page? Is it sufficiently up-to-date? If there is no date think twice. Undated factual information or statistical information should not be used.
  - From what type of domain does it come from? (educational, nonprofit, commercial, government, etc.)
    - Government sites: look for .gov, .mil, .us, or other country code
    - Educational sites: look for .edu
    - Nonprofit organizations: look for .org
  - Who wrote the page? Look for links that say “About us”, “Philosophy”, “Background”, “Biography”, “Who am I”, etc. Web pages are created with a purpose in mind by some person, agency or any other entity. They do not simply grow on the web. We must look for someone who claims responsibility for the contents.
  - Is there any bias evident in the site? Is the site trying to sell a product? Why the page was put on the Web? What are the author’s credentials on the subject?
    - Does the purported background or education look like someone who is qualified to write on this topic?
    - Might the page be created by a hobbyist, self-proclaimed expert, or enthusiast?
    - Is the page merely an opinion? Is there any reason we should believe its content more than any other page?

- ✚ **Content and accuracy:** do not always take the information at face value. Internet resources are rarely refereed or reviewed, as are scholarly journals and books. Look for the point of view of each source, and look for the evidence of bias. In addition, the source of the information should be clearly stated, whether original or borrowed from elsewhere (as in footnotes in a book or journal article).
- ✚ **Authorship (intellectual responsibility):** the credibility of the author must be ascertained, i.e. the author or producer of the information must be clearly identified in the source. Who is the author? What are his/her academic credentials? What else has this author written? Sometimes information about the author is listed somewhere in the source. There are circumstances which substantially limit what is permitted when using free Internet resources. Usage restrictions must be honored.
- ✚ **Comprehensiveness:** Determine how depth is the information, and if the content covers a specific time period or aspect of a topic or strive to be comprehensive.
- ✚ **Currency:** Is there a date on the Website? Is it sufficiently up-to-date? If there is no date think twice. Undated factual information or merely statistical information is no better than anonymous information and should not be used.
- ✚ **Connectivity:** how effectively can information be retrieved from the resource? Determine if the resource can be accessed reliably, and determine if there are links (hyperlinks) to other sources or relevant sites. Do they actually connect? If the source only provides online reading, try to determine if the hyperlinks are stable (this can be done by testing a number of hyperlinks to see if they really connect); determine if the resource can be accessed with standard software, or are there special software, or password requirements.
- ✚ **Availability:** determine whether the resources are available for online reading and/or available for download. The connectivity and stability of the resources that are only online readable should be considered. Sources with unstable hyperlinks should not be used.

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