Evaluating Internet Sources

It is important when reviewing sources, to consider their value for your project across a range of categories including authority, accuracy, objectivity, timeliness, and coverage or relevance. Below are a number of questions to help guide you in making choices about the usefulness of a source for your research project.

Authority:
• Is it clear who is sponsoring the page? (Government agency, university, national organization, etc.)
• Is the author’s name clearly stated?
• Are the author’s qualifications for writing on the subject evident?
• Can the legitimacy of the page’s sponsor be verified? (i.e. address, phone number, e-mail, etc.)

Accuracy:
• Are sources clearly listed for factual information so they can be verified?
• Are there many grammatical, spelling, or other errors?
• Who has the responsibility for the accuracy of the content of the material?

Objectivity:
• What is the purpose of the page? To persuade, explain, inform?
• Can you detect bias?
• If there are ads, are they clearly differentiated from the content of the text?

Timeliness:
• Are there dates on the page to indicate: When the page was written? When it was placed on the web? When it was last revised?
• Any indications that the site is kept current?
• Is it clear when the data of graphs, charts, etc. were gathered?

Coverage and Relevance:
• Is it the entire document or a summary/abstract?
• How in-depth is the information?
• What time period is covered?