

Website Evaluation

GRADE(S)	Intermediate
GOALS	Students will understand the reasons websites are developed and how to evaluate the site for use as a reference.
ESSENTIAL QUESTION	Why are websites created? What criteria should be used to evaluate a website?
STANDARD(S)	Library Scope and Sequence 1, 2 and 3 MST Standard 2
MATERIALS	Overhead/handout of domain names Computer LCD projector List of websites to use in lesson Evaluation worksheet for each student LMT reference – see page B-26 for additional information
DESCRIPTION	<p>Part 1: Why are Websites Created? Class discusses why a person/company/organization creates a website. Websites are made to Sell, Swindle, Share, Advocate, Communicate/Inform, Convince or Entertain. Review meanings of domain names and discuss reliability of information in different domains. Have students give examples of sites for some of the main categories.</p> <p>Part 2: What criteria should be used to evaluate a website? Develop a list of criteria and questions to ask in developing a website. Sites should be evaluated for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity (is the site biased towards someone or something; is it trying to sell something, is it trying to persuade you to believe something?, etc.) • Authority (who developed or sponsored this page? Do you know them? Do you trust them?) • Accuracy (is the information accurate?) • Currency (is the information up to date?) <p>Questions to ask: Who is the author of the site? Who/what organization sponsors the site? Is the author/sponsor information easy to find or is it buried? (Look for about us or contact us links, home page) When was the site last updated? What is the domain? How do you find the home page? (You might have to use the basic URL to find the sponsor or home page.) Is it important for my site to be 100% accurate, or can I use a less accurate site for this project?</p>

	<p>Part 3: Looking at Websites Using computer and LCD projector, or with students on individual computers, look at some of the sites listed on the attached page and evaluate according to the criteria developed above.</p> <p>Part 4: Evaluation of a Website Students each need an individual computer where they will select a website and complete the evaluation form for that site.</p>
ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the evaluation form • Sites used in classroom projects will be appropriate

Domain Name	Description
.com	Commercial entity
.edu	Educational institution
.gov	Government agency or department
.mil	Military organization
.net	Network resource
.org	Other type of organization, usually not-for-profit
.firm	Businesses
.store	Online stores
.web	Web related organizations
.arts	Cultural and entertainment organizations
.rec	Organizations emphasizing recreational activities
.info	Organizations that provide information
.nom	Individuals who want to be identified as such
.biz	Businesses
.coop	Cooperative businesses
.info	Open to anyone
.mus	Museums
.name	Personal registrations by name
.pro	Licensed professionals such as accountants, doctors and lawyers
.aero	Air transport

Name _____

Date _____

EVALUATING WEB SITES

1. What is the URL (address) of the Web page you are using?

<http://> _____

2. What is the name of the site?

Part 1: How does it look?

As you look at the questions below, put an X in the “yes” or “no” column for each question.

	YES	NO
Does the page take a long time to load?		
Are there big pictures on the page?		
Is the spelling correct on the page?		
Is the author’s name and email address on the page?		
Is there a picture on the page that you can use to choose links? (Image map)		
If you go to another page, is there a way to get back to the first page?		
Is there information in columns on the page? (Table)		
Is there a date that tells you when the page was made?		
If there are photographs, do they look real?		
Is the page well organized and easy to read?		

Part 2: What did you learn?

As you look at the questions below, put an X in the “yes” or “no” column for each question.

	YES	NO
Does the title of the page tell you what it is about?		
Is there an introduction on the page telling you what is included?		
Are the facts on the page what you were looking for?		
Would you have gotten more information from an encyclopedia?		
Would the information have been better in an encyclopedia?		
Does the author of the page say some things you disagree with?		
Does the page lead you to some other good information (links)?		
Does the page include information you know is wrong?		
Do the pictures and photographs on the page help you learn?		

Part 3: What can you tell us about this site?

What is the purpose for this site? _____

Is this site objective or does it reflect a bias? _____

If it is biased, what type of bias? _____

Who developed or sponsored this page? _____

Do you know them? Do you trust them? _____

Is the information current? _____

Is the information accurate? _____

Part 4: Summary

Looking at all of the questions and answers above, write a paragraph telling why this Web site is helpful or not helpful.

Suggested Sites for Evaluating Websites lesson

Finding websites to use as examples in a website evaluation lesson can be a daunting task. Sue Ann Brainard of SUNY Geneseo presented an RRLC workshop during the summer of 2004 on Evaluating Websites. As of March, 2005, her website still includes the presentation including all the criteria, links, worksheets and examples she used during the 3 hour workshop. It can be accessed at <http://library.geneseo.edu/~brainard/rrlcevaluatingoverheads.htm> - click on special projects and scroll to RRLC workshop on Evaluating Websites July 8, 2004. Listed below are some of the sites used in the workshop. As you know, websites change or disappear over time. Please review any of the sites you want to use to be sure they are still accessible when you present your website evaluation lesson. You may have good examples of your own.

Some of these sites are very controversial. For example, the “Martin Luther King, Jr.: a true historical examination” site is actually a Dr. King hate site. As you review sites, be sure to keep your audience in mind and choose appropriate sites. Since this was developed at the college level, some of the sites might be at a higher level of difficulty than would be appropriate for your students. Notes are included for some of the sites.

EXAMPLES

- Decide what the purpose/motive for each of these web sites is:

The Performing Arts in Colonial American Newspapers, 1690-1783
http://www.universitymusicedition.com/Performing_Arts/

Martin Luther King, Jr.: a true historical examination <http://www.martinlutherking.org/> NOTE: This is a hate site – check for language and appropriate content.

Republican National Committee <http://www.rnc.org/>

Getting Rid of Mold <http://www.wtnh.com/Global/story.asp?S=1538809>

A History of Women in America <http://www.fayettenam.com/history/>

Celebrity Hairstyles <http://www.lhj.com/home/Celebrity-Haircuts.html>

Delphinus <http://www.astronomy.net/constellations/delphinus.html>

- Decide what a skeptic would say about these sites:

Outer Banks Beach Home <http://www.rentors.org/guestbook.cfm?pid> NOTE: see dates on entries (2001-2002) and that most are **owner-entered** not customer entered.

Mankato Tourism <http://descy.50megs.com/mankato/mankato.html> NOTE: where do you find whales (salt or fresh water), where do you find palm trees and white sandy beaches (northern climate or southern). Site is a spoof.

Dihydrogen Monoxide Research Division <http://www.dhmo.org/> NOTE: dihydrogen monoxide is water.

Molossia <http://www.molossia.org/countryeng.html> NOTE: check the address of the “contact information” - is this a real country (located in Nevada???)

- Look for clues that reveal whether the author or sponsoring agency is qualified to present information on this topic. (HINTS: Look for "About us" links, examine the URL, do a separate search for info on the author or organization, do an advanced Google search to see what web pages link to it.)

Backpacking Europe <http://www.backpackingeurope.com/>

Team Tybee again passes Toshiba... <http://www.catsailor.com/Atlantic1000/Outer04.htm>

Cape Hatteras Lighthouse <http://www.nps.gov/caha/arrow.htm>

Youth Hostel List <http://www.nps.gov/caha/arrow.htm>

Button Collection <http://www.iisg.nl/collections/buttons/index.html>

- Try to determine what kind of bias or propaganda tactics were used in these web sites:



John Kerry <http://www.johnkerry.com/>

George W. Bush <http://www.georgewbush.com>

Vietnam Veterans Against Kerry <http://www.vietnamveteransagainstjohnkerry.com/>

Bush Jr.'s Skeleton Closet <http://www.realchange.org/bushjr.htm>

- Decide on criteria and determine confidence level:

<p>"I have to build a historically accurate pavilion from the Middle Ages."</p>	<p> <u>Medieval Pavilion</u> http://www.currentmiddleages.org/tents/fyellowpeak.html</p>
<p>"I am traveling to Cape Hatteras. I need to take the ferry from Beaufort, N.C. I have toddlers in the car with me."</p>	<p> <u>Cape Hatteras National Seashore</u> http://www.nationalparks.com/cape_hatteras_national_seashore.htm</p>
<p>"I have to do a research paper about Google and how it works."</p>	<p><u>Google Technology</u> http://www.google.com/technology/pigeonrank.html (be sure to scroll down to the date at the bottom)</p>
<p>"I'm a law school student. I need information on all of the statutes enacted by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in the year 2000."</p>	<p><u>Pennsylvania Statutes</u> http://home.att.net/~judiciary/index.html</p>
<p>I need to research art in the 1930's"</p>	<p><u>New Deal for the Arts</u> http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/new_deal_for_the_arts/index.html</p>