

## Accuracy –Authority –Objectivity –Currency –Coverage –Audience

These are some of the criteria librarians use to select materials for students to use in academic research. When you search the Internet, it's up to you to evaluate what you find. Here are some questions to guide you in evaluating Internet resources.

1. When using the Internet for academic research, you should never use a page that does not have an author. Does your Web page list an author? Who is the author? Keep in mind that the author can be an individual, an organization, or a government entity.

**Assignment:** Find a Web page on your topic, \_\_\_\_\_, with no author. Print out your page to show your class. (Hint: look at .com pages)

List your Web page here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who is that author, anyway? Many times, the value of the information found is measured by the reputation of the author. Serious information sources typically list authors with academic or career credentials in the subject area.

**Assignment:** Using the same topic, find and print a Web page that lists an unknown author –someone you've never heard of, who does not list either educational or career credentials. Find and list below one or more Web pages authored by

a) A nonprofit organization \_\_\_\_\_

b) An educational organization (higher education only)  
\_\_\_\_\_

c) A federal government site  
\_\_\_\_\_

d) A well-known expert on your topic  
\_\_\_\_\_

Compare these pages with the one by the unknown author. How does having a well-known author affect the usefulness of the page for academic research?

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\_\_\_\_\_

3. Is your web page fair and objective, or does the author (or sponsoring organization) have an axe to grind? How can you tell if your page is free from bias?

**Assignment:** Using the same topic, find and list below a Web page (with or without an author) that is *not* objective. How can you tell that it is not objective? List your reasons (You must have some better reason than that you don't agree with it). Compare it for objectivity with the previous pages you've found on this topic, and discuss the ways in which a truly objective page differs from the one you've just found.

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4. Who is the intended audience for your page? Using your topic, find and list below one of the following kinds of pages:

a) A page intended to be read by a particular age group – younger or older.

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b) A page aimed at a particular professional group.

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c) A page aimed at a group with a higher or lower reading level.

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d) A page aimed at a racial or ethnic group, or a specific gender.

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Discuss the ways in which the intended audience of the page changes its content.

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5. Find a Web page on your topic. **Guess** how long it is. Next, use Print Preview (in the File menu) to see how long your page would be if you were to print out the whole page. Is it longer or shorter than you guessed? NOW, find a comparable print source on your topic (try *Britannica*, any other reference book, or compare the length of the Web page to the corresponding chapter in your UCC 101 textbook. Which source is longer? Which source covers the topic more thoroughly? Are there any important aspects of the topic that are left out? Is one source more specialized, or more general, than the other?

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6. Web page dates usually refer to the date the material was created, the date that it was posted to the Web (or revised), or the date the Web page was printed out. Looking at the pages you have already found, what dates do you have? Can you tell if the information you have found is up to date? Does it matter? Why or why not?

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