



Evaluating and Citing Internet Resources



The popularity of the Internet has created questions in the researcher's mind regarding the accuracy and citation of information. Anyone with a computer and modem can publish anything on the Internet—even inaccurate, incomplete or false information. This dilemma requires that users of the Internet carefully and critically evaluate the information which they locate. Below are selected questions to keep in mind when attempting to determine the reliability and validity of the information found on Internet sites.

Evaluating Information Found on the Internet

Author/Source

- Does the resource have some reputable author/organization behind it?
- Is the information verifiable?
- Can the author/organization be contacted for further information?
- Is the author/organization qualified to write on the subject?
- Is the author/organization's point of view objective and impartial?
- What biases does/might the author bring to the information?
- Is the URL from an "org," "edu," "com," or "gov?"

Content

- Is the information fact or opinion?
- Is the information accurate and reliable?
- Was the research, data, or survey information detailed? Is the sample size reliable?
- Are the sources of the information/statistics stated?
- Are there political, ideological, or other biases?
- Are the sources of statistics or other information documented?
- What is the purpose of this information? Inform? Persuade? Entertain?

Currency

- How old is the information?
- If a site is updated, how frequently does this occur and when was it last updated?

Citing Information Taken from the Internet

Citing information found on the Internet is just as important as citing information found in print resources. Different academic disciplines employ different styles of formatting sources for writing in the different fields. The two most widely used style manuals in higher education are those from the Modern Language Association (MLA) used largely in the literary, humanities, and arts fields and the American Psychological Association (APA) used in the social sciences. Check their websites: <http://www.mla.org/style> and <http://apastyle.apa.org>.

To cite electronic publications using MLA format:

Author/Editor (if given). "Title of the Work." Website. Sponsoring Institution or Organization, Publication Date. Web. Access Date.

Example:

"Wind and Hydropower Technologies Program." *Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy*. U.S. Department of Energy, 2 Sept. 2008. Web. 16 Sept. 2008.

Research Tips