Evaluating Websites

The internet contains a vast amount of information, but because anyone and everyone can contribute to it, it's important to think critically about the information you find online.

1. Authority
   - Who is the author of the page?
   - Can anyone add content to the page? (eg. wikis)
   - What institution or organization hosts the page?
   - Do the author and/or page host provide contact information? What is their reputation?

2. Accuracy
   - How accurate are the information and links on the page?
   - Do the links lead to pages relevant to the topic? Do they work?

3. Objectivity
   - What is the purpose of the page: to persuade, argue, inform or to sell a product?

4. Currency
   - How current is the information on the page?
   - Does the page contain information on when it was created and/or last updated?
   - Are the links up to date?

5. Coverage
   - How does the information on the website compare to information available from other sources, such as books and periodicals?
   - Does the page provide information not readily available elsewhere?
• How valuable is the information on the page?
• Who is the intended audience?

**Domain Codes**

The domain code of a website can give you a good idea of the reliability of the information on the page and where the information is coming from. For example, websites hosted by government agencies and academic institutions are generally reliable sources.

Below are some of the more common domain codes you may encounter:

• .com - commercial source, available to anyone
• .edu - educational institution
• .gc.ca - government (Canada)
• .gov - government (US)
• .int - international organization (eg. NATO)
• .net - network, available to anyone
• .org - non-profit organization

More domain codes, including country/region codes, can be found [here](link).

JM Hall
12/2012