How to Evaluate a Website

Consider:

- **Purpose**: Why was the page created? To: Inform; Entertain; Share information; Advertise/Sell a product or service (business/marketing); Influence views, beliefs, elections (advocacy); Provide up-to-the-moment news; Personal enjoyment.

- **Sponsor/Owner**: On what type of Internet provider or domain does the page reside? Government agency (.gov, .mil, .us); Educational (.edu); Business/Company (.com, .biz); Association: Professional or Non Profit (.org), Trade, Entertainment; News bureau; Personal (Individual)

- **Organization and Content**: Is the page organized and focused? Is it well designed? Is the text well written? Are the links relevant and appropriate? Are the links evaluated? **HINT!** Compare your chosen website with the Wikipedia entry for the topic. Did the web author copy directly from Wikipedia? Fact check the information using a quality online database reference sources like CREDO Reference or Oxford Reference.

- **Bias – political / issue / product stance** (of the author or sponsor) Are all viewpoints presented in a balanced way?

- **Date of Production/Revision**: When was the Web page produced? When was it last revised? How up-to-date are the links? Are the links still viable?

- **Usefulness**: Is the Web page relevant to the current research project?

- **Authority/author** Who is responsible for the page? Is the author an expert in this field? What else has he/she written or produced? Does the author provide an e-mail address? How accurate is the provided information? Is a bias evident? **HINT!** If you need authoritative content, try a reference database like CREDO Reference.

- **What is it?** Web-only page; magazine news or journal article; government source, blog, etc.

- **Audience**: To what type of reader is the Web page directed? Is it appropriate for a college-level paper?

- **Coverage**: Does the page cover the topic comprehensively, partially or is it an overview?

- **Illustrations**: Are the graphics clear in intent, relevant and professional looking? Do the graphics add to or enhance the content?

- **Security** Are security and/or encryption systems employed when necessary?