Evaluating Web Site Information

“What's the difference between a little kid with a web site and a major corporation with one? Maybe nothing, maybe everything, but you won't know unless you examine the sites you find very carefully.”

IBM advertisement in Time Magazine November 24th 1997.
Used in the Auburn University Libraries Research Guide
http://www.lib.auburn.edu/bi/caveatlector.html

To evaluate websites ask yourself these questions:

• Why should you TRUST this source?
• Is this source PROMOTING a belief/cause?
• Is the material presented NEUTRALLY?
• Has it been UPDATED recently?
• Has the material been covered ADEQUATELY?

“Take your information to the CAFÉ”
Challenge, Adapt, File & Evaluate

(Harris, 1997)
Why should you **TRUST** this source? **Authority & Accuracy**

- Who has *written/created/edited* this web page(s)?
- Can you find out about the author's qualifications, credentials, background, or *authority* for writing this web page? Is he/she famous/connected with an organization that has an established *reputation*?
- Is the information presented on the web site *supported*?
  - Does the author *cite references/sources* or is a *bibliography* included?
- Have you looked at other websites with similar information?
  - How does it *compare*?

Is this source **PROMOTING** a belief/cause?

Is the material presented **NEUTRALLY**? **Advocacy & Objectivity**

- Is the information presented *balanced/impartial*?
- Is the information presented as a *fact/opinion/speculation*? are there any *references*?
- Is the author's purpose to *teach/advise/notify/describe*..?  
  - What is the *Purpose*?
- Is the author's intent to *influence/coax*?
- Is the author *affiliated* to a particular organization that maybe pushing an *agenda*?
- Can you find out who advocates/subsidizes/pays for this web page?

Has it been **UPDATED** recently?

Has the material been covered **ADEQUATELY**? **Currency & Coverage**

- Verify if there is a date for when this page was *last modified* or *updated*.
- Does the website *completely* provide the information that it says it will *cover*?
- Is the coverage *fair/rational/intelligent/thoughtful* for the subject-matter?
- Is the coverage *unwavering and unprejudiced*?

References:


*UCLA College library*: http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/hoax/qgrp2.htm

*Auburn University*: http://www.lib.auburn.edu/bi/caveatlector.html