

# Finding Web Resources

## Key Points

The Web is particularly useful for

- topics currently in the news
- information from governments and industry organizations
- information from interest groups and organizations
- information about products and companies
- finding people and organizations
- demographic information

CAUTION: information on the web is unordered, dynamic, constantly changing and evolving. Despite the sheer size of the WWW, currently estimated to contain 3 billion documents, the information is not indexed in any standard vocabulary and there is no quality control, anyone can publish anything at anytime.

### **Searching the Web**

#### **subject guides**

these categorize and group web sites by subject. Eg. Yahoo  
value-added - the librarians have created subject guides for all disciplines by selecting and evaluating the most useful web sites

#### **search engines**

search millions of web pages for whatever keywords you type in. Eg. Google  
value-added - the librarians have created a list of recommended search engines

#### **search techniques**

you can do more successful searches by using the search techniques mentioned in Module 2 - phrase searching " ", truncation \* ?, boolean **and, or, not**

A domain search allows you to limit your search to web sites with a specific domain such as .ca (Canadian sites), .edu (educational institutions), or .gov (government sites)

### **Evaluation**

Anything can and will be published on the Web, so critical evaluation skills are essential to determine the value of the information before you use it in your research.

There are six criteria to consider when evaluating a web site:

- **authority**
  - is it clear who created the web site?
  - is there contact information?
  - are the authors qualifications and credentials stated?
  - is the site supported by an organization?
- **currency**
  - is it clear when the information was last updated?
  - are the links up-to-date?
- **accuracy**
  - how reliable is the information?
  - are references given for statistical data?
  - is the information comparable to other sites on the same topic?
  - is a bibliography or reference list included?
- **coverage**
  - are topics explored in depth?
  - is there substantial original information or only links to other sites?
  - is the site selective or comprehensive?
- **objectivity**
  - is the information presented with a particular bias?
  - is the site trying to explain, inform, persuade or sell?
  - is there advertising which might indicate a conflict of interest?
- **purpose**
  - What is the purpose of the site and does the content support it?
  - Is the information geared toward a specific audience (scholars, general reader)?
  - Is the site well organized and focussed?
  - Are the links appropriate for the site?

**TIP:**

There is a checklist of the six criteria and questions available at

<http://www.library.dal.ca/How/Guides/Checklist/>

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