Paper #2: Website Evaluations

It is time to learn how to evaluate a website for creditable material.

Directions:
Read through the guide about how to use critical thinking skills to evaluate a website.

There are three subjects to choose from: Mayan Calendar, Sixties, and Eggs and Cholesterol. Each subject has 5 websites to look at. Choose 2 websites from one subject to evaluate using the criteria of Authority, Accuracy, Objectivity, Currency, Coverage, and Value.

Using the Web Wisely
Using the web correctly takes time and doing more than using Google.

Six suggestions to consider:

1. Make sure you are in the right place.
2. When in doubt, doubt.
3. Consider the source.
4. Know what is happening.
5. Look at details.

INFORMATION:

1. Ask yourself how you are using the Web. Doing research using the Web is different from looking up stuff for fun. Don’t use Google or other search engines just because they are easy or it is what you have done in the past.
   • Websites found through Google and other search engines may not be appropriate sources for academic research and other college work.
   • It may be better to start at a library web site, and it might save you time.

Don’t expect to find everything on the Web, because not everything is on the Web.
   a. Because of copyright, cost, and demand issues, some materials may not be on the web.
   b. You might see old stuff but most of written materials created before you were born, will not be on the web.
   c. More current materials may be available online for your library to purchase in online databases.
   d. You may have to go to the Library and find a book or paper copy of periodical article.

2. Almost anyone can put up almost anything on the Web for any purpose. Check closely for bias and assumptions.
   • Accuracy is not easy to confirm, you may have to check sources against each other.
   • Question authority of all web sources.

3. Check out who created the page. Check their academic credentials, or training, and which groups they are associated with.
• You will have to dig to find out information on the author.
• Look for clues in the web site address to find out if this is a commercial, governmental, personal, or academic web site.

4. What is the reason the web page was created, determine the main purpose of the site: to inform, to persuade, to see you something. If you know the reason the page was created, you can judge the contents better.
  • Marketing and opinion can both be disguised.
  • Individuals who have a certain point of view, may not be objective about the contents of the page.
  • What is the intended audience for the web page? Is it scholars, college students, middle school?
  • What is not being said that might be important to know, not just supporting a cause?

5. Look for the internal clues such as good grammar, correct spelling, the page’s organization, and when was it updated.
  • What do the graphics do for the page? Ornamentation or useful knowledge
  • Are the sources linked and do the links work?
  • The web site should have documentation for the facts presented. Sources should be listed.

6. The web page is created for a purpose on the web. Is it from a book, government documents?
  • Was the page designed for the web or was it something else?

Criteria that can be used to evaluate sources.
Authority: Who are the authors of the web page or who is responsible for it? What gives them the authority to write?

Accuracy: Do you have good reason to believe that the information on the site is accurate? Are the facts documented?

Objectivity: What is the author’s point of view? What is the purpose of the site?

Currency: When was the information on the page originally written? Has the site been updated?

Coverage: Does the site discuss the topic you are writing about? Is the information basic or is it detailed?

Value: Is the site worth visiting? Does the site offer anything informative, unique, or insightful? Is the site free of careless errors, misspelled words, and bad grammar?

Subject #1
Mayan Calendar

Consider the topic of the Mayan Calendar. Review all five sites to look at the content.

A. The Sacred Mayan Calendar
B. Mayan Calendar
C. Dreamspell Calendar
D. Mayan Calendar
E. Portals of Destiny

Part Two

Once you have looked at all the sites, go back and select two sites to evaluate more thoroughly. To evaluate the two sites, please briefly but thoroughly address the questions after each point:

- Make sure you are in the right place: Is this site a good source for the information you need? Was the page worth visiting?
- When in doubt, doubt: Do you have good reason to believe that the information on the site is accurate? Are the facts documented?
- Consider the source: Who are the authors and who is responsible for the site? What is their expertise?
- Know what's happening: What is the site's purpose or point of view?
- Distinguish Web pages from pages found on the Web: Was this page designed for the Web, or is it something else, such as a government document or a journal article?

Yes, it is difficult to be both thorough and brief at the same time, but please do your best. At least, there are no precise right and wrong answers for this assignment.

Subject #2

Sixties

Consider the topic of the Sixties. Take a brief look at all of the following five sites to get a sense of which ones are reliable sources of information.

A. Sixties Project
B. The 1960s
C. The Sixties
D. The Psychedelic 60's
E. Plower Power: An America 1960s Movement

Part Two

Once you have looked at all the sites, go back and select two sites to evaluate more thoroughly. To evaluate the two sites, please briefly but thoroughly address the questions after each point:

- Make sure you are in the right place: Is this site a good source for the information you need? Was the page worth visiting?
- When in doubt, doubt: Do you have good reason to believe that the information on the site is accurate? Are the facts documented?
- Consider the source: Who are the authors and who is responsible for the site? What is their expertise?
- Know what's happening: What is the site's purpose or point of view?
- Distinguish Web pages from pages found on the Web: Was this page designed for the Web, or is it something else, such as a government document or a journal article?
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Subject #3
Eggs and Cholesterol

Consider the topic of the Eggs and Cholesterol. Take a brief look at all of the following five sites to get a sense of which ones are reliable sources of information.

A. Egg Yolks as Dangerous as Smoking? Seriously Flawed Science
B. The Truth About Eggs and Cholesterol
C. Eggs and Cholesterol
D. Don't Be Chicken of the Egg
E. Eggs Do Not Cause Bad Cholesterol

Part Two

Once you have looked at all the sites, go back and select two sites to evaluate more thoroughly. To evaluate the two sites, please briefly but thoroughly address the questions after each point:

- Make sure you are in the right place: Is this site a good source for the information you need? Was the page worth visiting?
- When in doubt, doubt: Do you have good reason to believe that the information on the site is accurate? Are the facts documented?
- Consider the source: Who are the authors and who is responsible for the site? What is their expertise?
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