EVALUATING WEBSITES

Why do I need to know and how do I do it?

Evaluating Websites

Why do I need to know?

"Kids know pornography when they see it; they don't know misinformation when they see it."

--Alan November, 2009

Why do I need to know?

Anyone can fake a website or information on a website.

See how easy it is to make your own website and post any kind of disinformation.

Wikipedia: people have posted false info and the media has quoted it as fact.

Why do I need to know?

Some website authors update their websites if the present one doesn't go through the school firewalls.

Why do I need to know?

They don't want teachers educating students about how they can tear apart the web.

Why do I need to know?

Lose your website, and in months, find its backup.

Years ago, an animal activist teen built a website which she could no longer afford so they closed it down; she became depressed and committed suicide. If only she'd known: the internet makes its own backups.

Why do I need to know?

With reference to Obama winning election- new understanding is that regardless of message or money, the media and the understanding of it and its powers, that is what wins the election.

Before it was follow the money to the power, now it is also follow the website to its owner; you don't need a pile of money to create a movement (or in this case, become elected as the president).
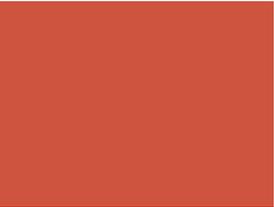
Why do I need to know?

Decoding web addresses is a critical skill in navigating the internet.

- The web address hold a lot of information about the source of the site and what kind of flavour it will have.

- It is directly connected to how it will come up in a search.

Why do I need to know?

Tip: The more hits you have to a website, the higher it appears when getting search results in a search engine (such as Google).

Tip: Sites that have your keywords in their address line will appear at the top of your search results.

How can I evaluate a website

to assess its authenticity?

Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators

- http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/eval.html

What points can be evaluated?

Kathy Schrock's

5W's of Website Evaluation

☐ Some questions to consider…

WHO

- Who wrote the pages and are they an expert?
- Is a biography of the author included?
- How can I find out more about the author?

WHAT

- What does the author say is the purpose of the site?
- What else might the author have in mind for the site?
- What makes the site easy to use?
- What information is included and does this information differ from other sites?

WHEN

- When was the site created?
- When was the site last updated?

WHERE

- Where does the information come from?
- Where can I look to find out more about the sponsor of the site?

WHY

- Why is this information useful for my purpose?
- Why should I use this information?
- Why is this page better than another?

Who owns the site?

- *Can they hide ownership?*

- Google http://www.google.com

- In the top ten you'll find this link:
http://www.martinlutherking.org

- Note link at the bottom for a "sister" site:
http://www.stormfront.org/forum/

Whois.com

Find out who owns something
www.whois.com

•Click on "Whois Lookup" and enter the domain name without http://www (example: stormfront.org)

stormfront is the kkk in the usa,

using sister site mlk as a hook

WHO authors the site?

- **http://www.whois.com**

- **Date license was made and who owns it, states who is <u>technical director</u>**

- **Equivalent to the TITLE PAGE OF A BOOK**

Can I cross reference?

- Cross Reference using the WAYBACK machine
  - http://waybackmachine.org/
  - **http://www.archive.org**
  - the web is backed up/stored at regular intervals so you can go back and find dead links.
  - The intervals are at approximately 6-24 months so if a website just became disabled recently, you'll have to wait a little while.
  - Look at sites from different years and find out how and why they've changed focus so that the sites could pass through school filters.

Cross-reference for bias

□ **Bias in news:**

□ To get results from outside your country, use the site:[country code here]

□ For example: site:tr for sites from the country Turkey.

□ Country code extensions are found at www.iana.org/domains/root/db

□ Find out what sources outside your own news are saying about your subject.

Authentic References

- Use websites that have been evaluated by a respected source.
- Bibliographies, references that can be checked.

  - Destiny Web sources: Webpath Express.
  - World Book http://www.worldbookonline.com/wb/Login?ed=wb
  - www.tekmom.com resources for students on the web
  - www.answers.com only referenced sources

Types of Sites to Watch Out For

- Bias
  - Personal, corporate, social, religious or political agenda
- Hoax
  - Misinformation, disinformation, re-directing
  - Or for fun, and because you can; practical joke.

Have a look at some hoax sites.

- http://www.d214.org/district_library/Fake_sites.aspx
  - There is a list of them here for students to look at, along with an assignment at the bottom.

Decode

Decode the web address

-this skill is CRITICAL

Tilde means it is personal public subdirectory opinion "~"

le: pubweb.northwestern.edu/~abutz/di/intro.html

types of websites

5 BROAD CATEGORIES

Business & Marketing

.com

.ca

- These sites are intended to promote and provide company information. Profit tends to be their bottom line.
- Example: www.amazon.ca

Personal

.net

- These are sites that represent the ideas of an individual. They may be housed on educational sites (like universities) or by commercial web space providers like Telus, Geocities, Yahoo.

Informational

.edu

.gov

.gc.ca

- These pages are intended to provide factual information. Many of these pages are sponsored by educational institutions and government agencies.
- Example: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/

Advocacy

.org

- These sites attempt to influence public opinion through their presentation of information. Most non-profit organizations, groups or associations would fall into this category.
- Example: www.worldvision.org

News

- News sites seek to provide very current information. There are many commercial news firms as well as some advocacy news sites. Many of these sites provide current information but request a fee for any back-dated information.

- Example: http://www.vancouversun.com/

Exceptions

Fun

Fakes

False

Phish

& more

- There are sites that deliberately mislead either for fun, for malice, or for criminal purposes
- Example: phishing sites that pretend to be legitimate sites in order to obtain personal information.

Sources

- Depending on how deep you wish your students to evaluate, use the website links for charts and assignments according to that.

- For example, a university Library tutorial on Evaluating Websites would have the most in-depth points to look at when evaluating a site. (Be careful of the content being suitable for your age group).

- One that is produced by a school district would have something geared more for K-12.

Sources

1. **Evaluation of Internet Sites**

http://www.d214.org/district_library/evaluate_site.aspx

Gives tips and includes a form for students to use.

Sources

2. http://www.quia.com/pages/websiteeval.html

Creston Middle School (in the States) list of sites.

3.http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/researchinfo/lessons/6-8/identifying_high_quality_sites/

Downloadable forms.

4. http://21cif.com/tools/evaluate/

This website provides a method for taking notes online using the questions provided. The notes can be copied into a word document or other format.

Sources

5. There is even a power point at [http://www.greenwood52.org/167520631133 6103/FileLib/browse.asp?A=374&BMDRN=20 00&BCOB=0&C=55259](http://www.greenwood52.org/1675206311336103/FileLib/browse.asp?A=374&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&C=55259) "Radcab"(has a list of .edu, .org etc)

6. This one costs money: [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/catalogue/products/descr iptions/passport.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/catalogue/products/descriptions/passport.cfm)

Sources

USE THIS FIRST. Excellent tutorial on website evaluation.
http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/webevaluation/

This is an excellent, step-by-step tutorial that will give you examples and have you make decisions on what sites are acceptable.
http://library.albany.edu/usered/wwwdex/index.html

Printable form that can be used to evaluate sites.
http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/evalmidd.html (example)

List of Bias Sites

- Go to http://www.commondreams.org
  - and you'll find a list of hundreds of websites with a bias
  - Watch for those sites that don't state their disclaimer…they may be too rabid, racist, or racy
  - Such as the one above...some topics and photos would be a bit much even for teens.

List of Bias Sites

These are from a worksheet I created on *evaluating websites* that might work for you. (It was for a health teacher.)—LM_Net

ABORTION   Is having an abortion safe?

Abortion-Breast Cancer Link

<https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.rnclife.org/faxnotes/2000/mar00/00-03-17.html>

<https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://members.tripod.com/~joseromia/jama.html>

Abortion: What Do You Want to Know

<https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.fwhc.org/abortion/flyer.htm>

List of Bias Sites

BEEF   Is eating beef good for you?

Go Veg.com

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.goveg.com/feat/rotting.html

PETA: Living Commentary

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.peta.org/living/commentary_listing.aspx?id=119

National Cattlemen's Beef

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.beef.org/newscattleproducerscarrybeef%27snutritionandsafetymessagetowashington5052.aspx

List of Bias Sites

ABORTION INFORMATION   Where can I get unbiased information about abortion?

NARAL: Abortion and Reproductive Rights: Choice for Women

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.naral.org/

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.prochoice.org/

 Pro Life Action League

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.prolifeaction.org/

https://www.alternativehealthtalk.com/VegetarianismPoultryandEggs.htm

List of Bias Sites

EGGS   Is eating eggs nutritious?

Iowa Egg Council

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.iowaegg.org/iowaeggcouncil.asp?idSection=5

Poultry and Eggs

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http

List of Bias Sites

DIARY PRODUCTS   Should you limit your intake of dairy products?

Dairy Council Digest

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://national dairycouncil.org/

What's Wrong with Dairy Products

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.all -creatures.org/health/dairy.html

PROSTATE CANCER AND MILK   Does milk play a role in prostate cancer?

Milk and Prostate Cancer?

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://healthlin k.mcw.edu/article/958142774.html

List of Bias Sites

MilkSucks.com: Got Prostate Cancer?

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.milksucks.com/prostate.html

MILK   Is milk good for you?

Whymilk - Milk U

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.whymilk.com/facts_gotmilk.htm

Hallelujah Acres: the Biblical Natural Diet

https://webmail.wawm.k12.wi.us/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.hacres.com/publications/health_tip.asp?tipid=103%26year=2001

List of Bias Sites

ABORTION and BREAST CANCER

Can breast cancer be caused by abortion?
http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/Organizations/healthnet/abor/topic06.html%231

LifeNews.com

http://www.lifenews.com/oped12.html

Dr. James Howenstine

http://www.newswithviews.com/Howenstine/james3.htm

List of Hoax Sites

Examples of just a few hoax sites. Some funny, some not so nice.

http://www.martinlutherking.org/

Feline Reactions to Bearded Men
http://www.improbable.com/airchives/classical/cat/cat.html

The White House http://www.whitehouse.net

Aluminum Foil Deflector Beanie http://zapatopi.net/afdb.html

Dihydrogen Monoxide Research http://www.dhmo.org

Strawberry Popï"Tart Blow Torches http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/~pmichaud/toast/

List of Hoax Sites

- MoonBeam Enterprises and Lunar Travel Agency

  http://www.dreamweaverstudios.com/moonbeam/moon.htm

- Tree Octopus http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus.html

- British Stick Insects http://www.brookview.karoo.net/Stick_Insects

- Bio defense detectorï·"McWhortle http://www.mcwhortle.com/index.htm

- Monitor camera...takes your picture

  http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Acres/3072/camera1.html

- Leftï·"handed Whopper release from Burger King

  http://www.zbach.com/page%2025/whopper.htm

- First Human Male Pregnancy http://www.malepregnancy.com

- Jackolope conspiracy http://www.sudftw.com/jackcon.htm

List of Hoax Sites

SPECIFIC HOAX SITES START HERE:

Here's the California velcro crop page. http://home.inreach.com/kumbach/velcro.html

Save the Pacific Tree Octopus http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus.html

Bureau of Sasquatch Affairs. Hmm.. notice this is the same basic web **address of the Pacific Tree Octopus. http://zapatopi.net/bsa.html**

The Republic of Molossia http://www.molossia.org/countryeng.html

The lunar travel agency. http://www.dreamweaverstudios.com/moonbeam/moon.htm

The British Stick Insect Foundation. http://www.brookview.karoo.net/Stick_Insects/

Killer Tornado, Kansas, 1938.
http://www.cimms.ou.edu/~doswell/Conference_papers/SELS96/WoO.html

List of Hoax Sites

- The end of blondes. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/2284783.stm
- The technology behind google's great results.
- http://www.google.com/technology/pigeonrank.html
- Dog Island. http://www.thedogisland.com/index.html
- Website for the fictititous town of New Hartford, MN.
- http://descy.50megs.com/NewHartford/newhtfd.html
- WARNING: Do not get your credit card or checkbook ready. This might
- look legit at first....http://www.mcwhortle.com/index.htm
- Would you want to visit the Sellafield Zoo?
- http://www.brookview.karoo.net/Sellafield_Zoo/
- Britain for Americans. http://www.brookview.karoo.net/BFA/index.htm
- Eastern Active Technology. http://www.ediblegear.com/index.html
- Many people were fooled by the biography of this non-existent artist.
- http://www.umich.edu/%7Eengtt516/index2.html
- This is the #1 website you get in google if you type in "facts about
- beluga whales". http://www.idiotica.com/encyclopedia/content/Beluga.htm

Test it out!

Do you have a webpage? If so, make up your own "bogus" website. You could use examples from your own area. My students were astounded to learn that anyone could put up a webpage with any information. If you have a Smartboard you could even have students help you improve it with bogus information. – LM_Net