

Criteria for Web Evaluation Assignment

Information Literacy GEO this assignment addresses: Performance Indicator Two-- Evaluates, selects, and critically analyzes information. Though they frequently use websites in papers and projects as research resources, students often have no criteria for evaluating or analyzing them.

Objectives of assignment:

- Students will be able to discuss and consider criteria for analyzing the quality of the content on websites.
- Students will be able to apply criteria during the website evaluation process.
- Students will be able to determine which websites will be authoritative, reliable research resources.

Preparation: Before doing the assignment, it may be necessary to discuss Search Engines and internet searching briefly. The instructor will need to create a list of websites from which the students will work. Also, the instructor should prepare the students for the assignment by demonstrating how criteria can be applied to one reliable site and one site of questionable merit prior to the web evaluation assignment. Reviewing and distributing copies of the criteria will prepare the students to discuss and apply criteria during the exercise. Examples of various criteria are linked below this section. The assignment sheet was created using Jim Kapoun's "Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages."

Criteria Websites:

- Association of College & Research Libraries, Jim Kapoun
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues1998/julyaugust6/teachingundergrads.htm>
- University of Illinois at Chicago, Health Sciences Center
<http://www.uic.edu/classes/bhis/bhis510/lim3/criteval.htm>
- OSU Libraries
<http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/les1/index.html>

Assignment: (Computer Lab necessary)

1. The instructor should assign the students to groups of no more than five.
2. After the students are in groups, a list of websites and web evaluation worksheets should be distributed to each group.
3. Since only one set of worksheets will be turned in to the instructor from each group, the instructor should ask each group to choose a "group recorder." The recorder is responsible for writing down the group's answers.

4. At this point, if the instructor has not already done so, the instructor should explain the assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to apply the criteria, which were discussed previously, to the evaluation of a website's content. The students will use the worksheet to assess the quality of five different websites as if they were doing research for a paper or a class project. Every member of the group should write his or her name on the worksheets. Using the worksheets that have been distributed, the students should evaluate each website on the list provided by the instructor. For each website, answer every question on the worksheet. Along with answering the questions on the worksheets, the group will be asked to rank the websites from first to last, 1 (best) to 5 (worst). The website ranked number 1 is the website that the group considers the best to use for the purposes of research; the website ranked number 5 is the website that the group considers the worst to use for the purposes of research. This should take approximately thirty minutes.
5. After the groups have completed this portion of the assignment, the instructor should have each group write the name of the website that they ranked first and the name of the website that they ranked last on the boards. If all the answers are the same, the instructor should hold a general discussion on how the groups applied the criteria to reach their decisions about the two sites written on the board. If the answers differ, the instructor can use that as an opportunity to discuss why each came up with a different response when they were using the same criteria. As the instructor reviews the websites with the class, the websites should be projected so that various aspects of the site can be viewed and discussed.
6. Collect the worksheets from each group at the end of the class.

Important summation/review points:

During the discussion part of the class, the instructor should emphasize how the criteria have been used to determine whether or not a website would make a good research resource. Authority, Currency, and Objectivity are good ways of determining the validity of a website and can be quickly pointed out to the class. The instructor should stress the importance of warily approaching all web postings but remind students that by applying some criteria they can find resources well worth the search.