



**The Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts
The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program
122 Porter Hall**

Evaluating Internet Sources as Resources

Because most Internet sources are not “peer-reviewed,” the information you find may not be reliable. If the information you are seeking is available through more trustworthy print sources, refer to those texts. However, if you must use Internet sources as scholarly resources, ask yourself these questions when evaluating web sites:

Authorship/Credibility

- Can you tell who authored or sponsored the site?
- How credible is the author or sponsor of the site; what credentials does he/she have?
- Are other credible sources familiar with this source?
 - Check The Library of Congress to see what else an author has written.
 - Read *Who's Who in America* or the *Biography Index* to learn more about an author, or look up the person on the Internet Directory of Published Writers (<http://www.writers.net>).
 - If there is no information on the site, use a search engine or search Usenet to find information about the author/source of the website.

Audience & Purpose

What is the purpose or goal of a web site (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to sell), and who is the intended audience? Check the web address for these extensions:

.edu	educational institutions	.mil	military
.gov	government	.net	network provider
.org	nonprofit organization	.com	company/business for profit

Accuracy/Bias

- What organization, institution, or company is the author associated with?
- What are the goals of the organization, institution, or company?
- Does the sponsoring group monitor what's published? How rigorous is that review process?
- Might the sponsoring group be biased? Do they do disinterested research?

Relevance/Timeliness

Is the information current enough to be useful? When was it updated?

- You can check at the bottom for a "last revised" date and/or notice if there are numerous dead links on a site.

Citation Guides for Electronic Sources:

Bedford St.Martin's on-line [Citation Style Guide](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html) explains how to cite sources in Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), Council of Biology Editors (CBE)—now the Council of Science Editors (CSE)—and Chicago formats.

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html>

Diana Hacker, author of *A Pocket Style Manual*, explains how to cite and format sources using Council of Science Editors (CSE) style guidelines, as well as guidelines for all other major writing styles.

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c11_s1.html

The **Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University** offers numerous web links, handouts, and guidelines for citing sources from different disciplines, including: math, chemistry, biology, geology, sociology, psychology, political science, English, journalism, law, medicine, and engineering.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/>

The Library of Congress provides an on-line guide that explains how to cite electronic resources from The Library of Congress Web site, including: cartoons, films, legal documents, maps, newspapers, photographs and drawings, sound recordings, special presentations, and texts.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/start/cite/index.html>

Creating Bibliographic Entries:

Landmarks for Schools Web Site for Teachers will create citations in MLA, APA, and Chicago styles.

<http://www.citationmachine.net/>

Sourceaid LLC provides online citation guides for all writing styles, as well as a citation builder for use in creating a bibliography.

<http://www.sourceaid.com/>

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw>

For an appointment, call x2651