Evaluating Online Information

This framework can be used to evaluate websites, news articles, and other online documents for your research.

Purpose

What is it?
Common forms include web pages, scholarly articles, government publications, news articles, opinions, sales pitches...

Who is the intended audience?

Creator

Who is the author?
Do they have expertise in this area?

Who sponsors the site?
Who funds the site?
If it is a news site, what journalistic practices do they use? Have the facts been checked?

Content

Is the information accurate? Is it current?

Does it advertise a product or service?

Is there a bias or point of view?

Has the information been critiqued or reviewed?

Are the sources clearly stated?

Is the information credible? Is it supported by other good sources?

Design

Does the site look credible?

Is it logically and clearly displayed?

Is the writing style appropriate for the audience?

Are there typos or misspellings?

Are the links working?

Note: Though it's a commonly used shortcut, good design is not a replacement for the other parts of the framework!

Decoding the .com

.com a commercial enterprise?
.org an organization?
.gov government sponsored site
.edu an educational organization

.com, .org, and other domains can be purchased by anyone.