

EVALUATING INTERNET RESOURCES

Introduction

This document assumes that you are familiar with the use of a computer keyboard and mouse, have a working knowledge of Microsoft Windows and are familiar with using the World Wide Web.

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1 Evaluating Web Sites for Quality

Objectives To evaluate a set of web sites for quality using set criteria.

Method You will access a number of web sites and evaluate.

Comments The internet is a vast network of ever-growing, unfiltered information sources. When information is filtered, reviewed, authenticated and evaluated, end users come to trust the source and accept an expert's assessment that it is valid and authoritative. When it isn't, end users must assess and evaluate the information themselves.

Activity 1.1 Choose any ONE of the web pages listed below and connect to the site using the URL provided:

PowerWatch

<http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/>

Feline Reactions to Bearded Men

www.improbable.com/airchives/classical/cat/cat.html

Controversies and Cover-ups

<http://www.dreamscape.com/morgana/jupiter.htm>

Educause Review

<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/>

Activity 1.2 Consider the following questions when looking at the web site. Make a note of your answers in the space provided below.

Can you find out who is the author of this web site?

This could be an individual or a corporate author. Is this information clearly available? Is there an email address available at which you could contact the author?

Is there any indication of the designation or authority of the author?

Can you establish their credentials (e.g. are they a member of staff in a University department?). Is there evidence that their organisation supports the information on the web page, or is a disclaimer visible on the page?

Can you establish the corporate owner of the information?

This could be, for example, a University or a commercial company. Can you establish this from the web address if it isn't immediately obvious on the page?

What is your impression of the reliability of the information?

On what basis have you formed this impression? (e.g. from prior knowledge of the subject area, from looking at the bibliography or linked information etc.)

How up to date is the information?

Is there a date when the document was last modified or updated?

What do you think about the way in which the information is structured?

Is it easy to find your way around the web site? How have graphics been used?

From your answers to the above questions, what do you think, overall, of the quality of the web site you have been viewing?**Activity 1.3**

Finally, visit the following site. Is it genuine or is it a fake? Click on the link to [snopes](http://snopes.com) to find out more.

<http://j-walk.com/other/goodwife/>

2 Online Tutorials for Quality Evaluation

- Objectives** To use tutorials to learn about information quality issues on the Internet.
- Method** You will investigate the Quick tutorial for children.
- Comments** The Quick tutorial is aimed at helping primary school children learn about evaluating web sites, but covers the basics well.

Activity 2.1 Try your subject-specific internet information tutorial at

<http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk/>

The tutorials for further education cover much of the same material but are shorter and “less academic”

Activity 2.2 Access the Quick tutorial at:

<http://www.quick.org.uk/menu.htm>

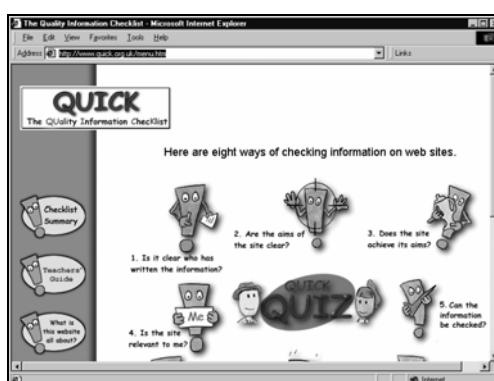


Figure 2-1 The Quick tutorial

The Quick tutorial aims to help primary school children learn more about evaluating web sites.

Click on Teachers' Guide and read more about the aims of the site.

When you have finished, click on Back to menu at the foot of the page to take you back to the main menu.

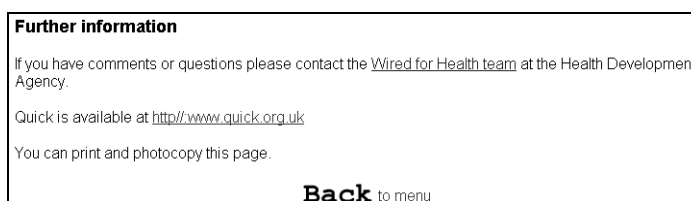


Figure 2-2 Link to the main menu

Activity 2.3 Now work your way through the brief tutorial, which is made up of an eight-point checklist.

Click on the first item in the checklist – 'Is it clear who has written the information?' and work through that section.

From there you will be able to access the other seven stages of the

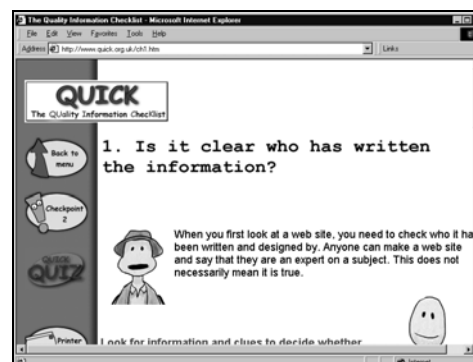


Figure 2-3 Stage one of the

checklist in sequential order. When you have finished all of the eight stages, you can take a quick quiz to test what you have learnt.

tutorial

3 Examining Web Addresses

Objectives To understand how the web address of a resource can give clues to its origin and affiliation.

Method You will examine a number of web addresses and try to learn about the source of the page.

Comments Web addresses or Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) can often give useful clues about the authority of the source of the page. This is particularly useful when making judgements about sites in search engines listings

Activity 3.1 Go to the site at:

<http://www.usg.edu/galileo/skills/unit07/>

From the Table of Contents, select the option 8. Evaluating Internet Information. Read this page, which describes how URLs can give valuable clues about the authority of the information. Once you have read this page, you should have enough knowledge to complete the following tasks.

Activity 3.2 *Please attempt to answer the following tasks just by looking at the URL.*

Both of the following pages are based in a department of the same institution. Firstly, by just looking at the URL, can you work out what type of institution it is and which country it is located in? Secondly, what clue in the first URL might make you more doubtful about the affiliation of the information contained on that page to the institution?

<http://www.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/~cmpac/>

<http://www.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/publications/>

Activity 3.3 The following page is about the health hazards of tobacco, but no information about the author or source is given. Can you get any ideas about the type of site this is just by looking at the URL?

<http://www.gasp.org/environmental.html>

Now go to the page itself. How might you find out more about source of the page?

HINT - Working backwards through an URL to higher level pages usually reveals the source of the page.

Activity 3.4 This US site is against censorship and opposes the use of filtering software in public libraries. Which part of the URL indicates this site might have a biased view?

<http://www.aclu.org/issues/cyber/box.html>

HINT - URLs often give an indication of the type of organisation that the site belongs to, for example commercial or government.

4 Other Resources For Evaluating Quality

Objectives To explore a number of web sites which contain information about evaluating web sites for their quality.

Method You will access a number of web sites using the URLs given below, and read about other criteria which can be applied when evaluating web sites for their quality.

Activity 4.1 The web sites listed below all cover the topic of evaluating information on the web for quality. Take a look at some of these sites and read about other approaches which can be taken to establish the reliability of information on the web.

Searching and Evaluation, from University of Cal at Berkeley

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html>

Internet Information skills for a variety of subjects

<http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk/>

Guide to Information Quality in the World Wide Web Virtual Library

<http://www.ciolek.com/WWWVL-InfoQuality.html>

Thinking Critically About World Wide Web Resources

<http://library.morningside.edu/eval.htm>

Ten C's For Evaluating Internet Resources

<http://www.uwec.edu/library/Guides/tencs.html>

Evaluating Internet Resources for SOSIG

<http://www.sosig.ac.uk/desire/ecrit.html>

Widener University's page on Evaluating Web Resources

<http://www.widener.edu/?pageId=480>

Susan Beck's Good, Bad and Ugly pages at New Mexico State University

<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html>

Stanford University Guidelines for Web Credibility

Aimed at creators of web sites

<http://www.webcredibility.org/guidelines/index.html>

Judge - Web Sites for Health

Guidelines for evaluating health web sites

http://www.judgehealth.org.uk/consumer_guidelines.htm