Drama

Analysing web sources

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The Internet has provided people all around the world access to information and research in all fields faster and easier than ever before. We have 640 terabytes of data being transferred every 60 seconds, however, how often do you determine the reliability and accuracy of the information found on the Web?

Understanding that not all information found on the Internet is correct, relevant or reliable is essential. We must develop skills in assessing the validity and credibility of the information presented as key skills in the digital age. Consider the last time you completed an assessment. When you cut-and-pasted from Wikipedia did you pause to think about where this information came from? Finding reliable information from credible sources will require you to go beyond the first four matches on search engines such as Google.com and dig a little deeper. It will need you to develop skills in digital citizenship and evaluate sources based on their authority, relevance and accuracy.

Use the steps listed below to guide you as you evaluate the reliability of the information being presented to you.

Step one – personal pages

Personal pages, such as blogs are not always reliable and require you to learn more about the author, their credential and their relationship to the topic. Often the person's name is included in the URL or title of the page.

Step two - type of domain

The domain type should match the content type.

Domain	Content
.com	commercial
.edu	educational
.mil	military
.gov	government
.org	nonprofit

Step three - who published it?

It is important to find the agency or person that published the article. Reliable publishers will publish reliable content and authors, making the information provided more accessible and dependable. To see the publisher, look between http:// and the first /.

Step four - who wrote it?

Find the author or organisation that wrote the article you're reviewing and find more information about them. Often an article will provide a small biography of the author or contain a link to their bio that will tell you more details about their education and experience. It is then up to you to determine whether believe they are qualified to write articles of this nature.

Step five – when was it written?

In the area of research, old sources are not always credible. When researching current topics publishing dates are important as they will reflect changes in findings and new research. When examining older topics, reputable sources published closer to the time of the event or issue provide a good starting point.

Step six - check sources and links

Articles always refer to other sources as a way of supporting their findings. It is important to review how sources are cited and what types of sources are being used within an article to support their findings. This will help you determine if a source is reliable and relevant. If possible, go to the primary source being referenced to ensure the findings have not been altered. Further, reviewing these sources will also ensure the article is not based on opinion. Instead it is a result of research.

Step seven - overall evaluation

Once you have reviewed all this information, you should have a better idea of whether a source is reliable and credible. It is important to note that anyone can edit content on the Internet and consequently you may be accessing opinions rather than facts.