WEBSITE EVALUATION

Use the **5W’s method**: Who, What, When, Where, Why?*

**Who?** Authority

- Who wrote the pages and are they an expert? Enter the author’s name into a search engine to conduct a quick background check.
- Are there any links to in-depth information about the author or organization?
- Can you contact the company or author through a real world postal address or phone number? Can you confirm that the company or author is a credible, authoritative source of information?
- To check who owns the domain name, go to: [http://www/networksolutions.com/whois/index.jsp](http://www/networksolutions.com/whois/index.jsp)
- To see what pages link to the site, type into Google: link: namesite
- How can you find out more about the author? Google them!

**What?** Objectivity – Goals of the Authors

- What is the purpose of the site? To sell, inform, persuade?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Does the site rely on loaded language or broad, unsubstantiated statements?
- Is emotion used as a means of persuasion?
- Does the site offer more than one viewpoint?
- Are there links to further in-depth resources or links to such resources?

**When?** Currency

- When was the site created?
- When was the site last updated/revised?
- Do the links work?
- What's the copyright status of material found on the site?

**Where?** Accuracy - Reliability

- Where does the information come from?
- Learn to deconstruct a Uniform Resource Locator (better known as a URL or "site address").
Using this URL from the Assumption College Library as an example:

http://www.assumption.edu/dept/Library/libraryindex.html

http://www - The "http" notation here indicates that this is a hypertext document (most online documents are in this format). The "www" is short form for the "World Wide Web," where all Web sites reside.

assumption.edu/ - he second part of a URL contains the domain name of the person or organization hosting the Web site -- in this case, Assumption. The ".edu" which follows indicates that the site is hosted by an educational institution.

department/Library/libraryindex.html- The last section maps out the pathway of directories and sub directories leading to the page you are on. For this particular page on the Assumption Library site, "dept/" indicates that you are in a specific department, in this case, the library. The final URL entry (in this case "library index") indicates the name of the page or document you have arrived at. "Html" indicates the code or format that it has been created in.

~ Sometimes you might see a "user" reference or tilde symbol (~) in a sub directory, followed by a name. This indicates that you may be on a personal Web page that is being hosted by an ISP (Internet Service Provider).

Where can I look to find out more about the producer/sponsor?
The type of organization behind a Web site can give some clues to its credibility.

.gov In the US, .gov applies to federal departments. In Canada, provincial governments use .gov followed by a provincial abbreviation and .ca

.us Schools, educational organizations, libraries, museums and some government departments may be registered under a two-digit country of origin code, such as .ca, .us or .au

.edu The United States originally created .edu to indicate American colleges and universities offering 4-year degree programs. Most Canadian universities tend to use .ca.

.org Back in the early days of the Web, .org indicated a wide assortment of groups, including non-profit organizations, and .com indicated commercial organizations.

Now, anyone can apply for and use these letters in their domain names. For example, the Web site for the YWCA in Calgary ends with .com, in Vancouver it ends with .org, and in Montreal it’s .ca!
**Why?** Coverage/value of the content. Is the internet even the best place to go?

- Why is this information useful for my purpose?
- Why should I use this information?
- Why is this page better than another?
- Can I get the information faster off-line?
- Does the online material I'm finding suit my needs?
- Am I able to verify this information?

*Adapted from Kathy Schrock’s “5 W’s of Website Evaluation (1998),” and Media Awareness Network’s, “5 W’s of Cyberspace (2008).” Revised 10-27-09, Emmanuel d’Alzon Library.*