## Website Evaluation Checklist

**Title of the site you are evaluating:**

1. **Look at the Web Address:** ___________________________
   - **Personal page or site?**
     - (Address has: ~ or % or "users" or "members" or "people")
   - **What type of domain is it?**
     - Appropriate for the content?
     - □ .com  □ .org  □ .edu  □ .gov/mil
     - □ non-U.S.  □ other
   - Published by a reputable person/group?
     - Does it match the name of the site?
     - Publisher or Domain Name entity:

2. **Find the answers to these questions on the Web page:**
   - **Who wrote the page?**
     - □ e-mail  □ name
   - **Date page was created/updated?**
     - Date:                        Current enough for topic?
   - **Credentials on the subject?**
     - (Refer to home page if not evident on the page.)
     - Evidence?

3. **Look for these indicators of quality:**
   - Sources well documented/cited?
   - Complete? If second-hand information, is it altered or forged?
   - Links to more resources?
     - Do they work?
   - Other viewpoints? Biased or objective?

4. **What do others say?**
   - **Who links to it? Hint:** In Google use: `link:URL`
     - **(Example)** `link:msass.case.edu`
     - Linked to by many or few sites?
     - Reviews or opinions of it?
   - **Look up the author using a search engine (Google, Bing, etc.)**

5. **Purpose**
   - **Why was the page put on the Web?**
     - □ Inform, facts, data  □ Explain
     - □ Persuade  □ Sell Something
     - □ Entice  □ Share/disclose
     - □ Other:
   - **Tone:** Possibly ironic? Satire or parody?
   - **Audience?**
     - For whom is the site intended?
     - □ Undergraduates  □ Graduate Students
     - □ Children (K-8)  □ Teens (9-12)
     - □ General public  □ Members (org./group)
     - □ Researchers  □ Professionals in the field

*Is this website an appropriate source for this paper/project? Why or Why not?*
Website Evaluation Checklist

There are a number of criteria that users should consider when using websites for their research. Look at your completed checklist and evaluate the answers based on the qualities listed below.

Authority
It is necessary to determine the author or publisher of the website because anyone can post content to the Web. Therefore, it is important to determine the author’s qualifications and find out who sponsors the site. A description of the organizational purpose should be linked in some way to the information page.

- Is there a link to information about the author or the sponsor?
- If the page includes neither a signature nor indicates a sponsor, is there any other way to determine its origin?
- Look for a header or footer showing affiliation.
- The web address may indicate the organization (e.g., http://www.fbi.gov)
- Look at the domain since it can clue you in as to whether it’s an educational institution, a commercial site, a nonprofit organization, etc. .edu, .com, .au, .uk, .org, .net

Accuracy
The factual information should be referenced so that you can verify its accuracy. Errors in grammar and spelling may indicate poor quality control. Unlike traditional print resources, web resources rarely have editors or fact-checkers and no web standards exist to ensure accuracy.

- Is the information reliable and error-free?
- Is there an editor or someone who verifies/checks the information?

Objectivity
Realize that information provided in pages that include advertising may have a different bias and intent than those offered as a public service. A commercial site (.com) may be trying to sell you its product. Also remember that information presented by organizations or nonprofit groups will reflect their viewpoint on a particular issue.

- Does the information show a minimum of bias?
- Is the page designed to sway opinion?
- Is there any advertising on the page?
- What is the motivation for creating the website?

Shelf-Life
Look for indications of when the page was written and when the page was revised. Unfortunately, publication or revision dates are not always provided. If a date is provided, it could indicate when the material was first written, or first placed on the Web or when the material was last revised. You will want to find evidence (tables, statistics) indicating that the site is regularly maintained. An older website can be used if the information has not changed and/or is still relevant (i.e. a webpage about the life of Henry VIII).

- Is the page dated? If so, when was the last update?
- How current are the links? Have some expired or moved?

Content
The purpose of a web page can vary. The information can be to educate, influence or may be just for entertainment and not for research. Often it is difficult to determine the extent of coverage of a topic from a web page and the page may or may not include links to other web sites or print references. If there is a print equivalent to the web page, try to determine whether the entire work or only a portion of it is available on the web.

- What topics are covered?
- What does this page offer that is not found elsewhere?
- What audience is the material meant for?
- How in-depth is the material?