

Beyond Google

Using Electronic Resources

Lost on the Information Highway?

- Internet Myths

- Everything is online
- Everything online is accurate

- Where do I go first?

- Library – online catalog, databases, books magazines
- WWW

Library

- Databases – journals, magazines, reference resources
 - B&S Databases – Ebsco
 - Public Library Databases
- Online catalogs – books, magazines
- Virtual Libraries
- Online chat HELP!

Search Strategies

- What is my topic?
- Brainstorm a list of keywords.
- Boolean Operators
- Where to search?

Database Searching

- What is a database?
 - Journal articles
 - Newspapers
 - Reference – encyclopedias, dictionaries, directories
- Free or Fee?
- Two basic types:
 - Full text
 - Abstract/citation

Inside a Database

- Records
- Fields
 - Title
 - Author
 - Journal Title
 - Date of Publication
 - Abstract
 - Full text

Searching a Database

- Most databases have features in common.
- What fields to search?
- Tips
 - Too many hits – narrow your search with more keywords, dates, journal titles.
 - Too few hits – expand your search, use fewer terms
 - Use “advanced” search

Understanding Database Results

- List of citations
- Abstract – brief summary
- Full Text – format options
- Subject headings, descriptors
- Saved Lists
- Print, Save, Email

Distinguishing Sources

- Scholarly
- News or General Interest
- Popular
- Sensational

Using the Web for Research

1. Subject directories – built by people
2. Using Search Engines Effectively
3. Evaluating what you find

Subject directories

- Built by information specialists
- Selected, evaluated, annotated
- Organized into subject categories

- Librarians' Internet Index <http://lii.org/>
 - By a group of California library professionals
- Infomine <http://infomine.ucr.edu/>
 - By UC consortium of library professionals
- BUBL <http://bubl.ac.uk/>
 - Selected resources from the Strathclyde Universtiy in Scotland

Larger directories

- Google Web directory
 - <http://directory.google.com>
 - 5+ million pages - less than 0.04% of Google web
- About.com — a collection of specialized directories
 - Organized by subject experts
 - <http://about.com/>
- Yahoo's directory
 - <http://dir.yahoo.com>

Search Engines Smart

- Advanced Search
- Help
- Boolean Operators
- Use more than Google – try Yahoo, MSN, Ask.com
- <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html>
- <http://www.searchenginewatch.com>

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Why Evaluate What You Find on the Web?

- Anyone can put up a Web page
 - about anything
- Many pages not kept up-to-date
- No quality control
 - most sites not “peer-reviewed”
 - less trustworthy than scholarly publications
 - no selection guidelines for search engines

■ <http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html>

Web Evaluation Techniques

Before you click to view the page...

- Look at the **URL** - personal page or site ?

~ or % or **users** or **members**

- Domain name appropriate for the content ?

edu, com, org, net, gov, ca.us, uk, etc.

- Published by an entity that makes sense ?

- News from its source?

www.nytimes.com

- Advice from valid agency?

www.nih.gov/

www.nlm.nih.gov/

www.nimh.nih.gov/

Web Evaluation Techniques

Scan the perimeter of the page

- Can you tell who wrote it ?
 - name of page author
 - organization, institution, agency you recognize
 - e-mail contact by itself not enough
 - Credentials for the subject matter ?
 - Look for links to:
 - “About us”
 - “Philosophy”
 - “Background”
 - “Biography”
 - Is it recent or current enough ?
 - Look for “last updated” date - usually at bottom
 - If no links or other clues...
 - truncate back the URL
- <http://hs.houstonisd.org/hspva/academic/Science/Thinkquest/gail/text/ethics.html>

Indicators of quality

- Sources documented
 - links, footnotes, etc.
 - As detailed as you expect in print publications ?
 - do the links work ?
- Information retyped or forged
 - why not a link to published version instead ?
- Links to other resources
 - biased, slanted ?

What Do Others Say ?

- Search the URL in [alexa.com](https://www.alexa.com)
 - Who links to the site? Who owns the domain?
 - Type or paste the URL into the basic search box
 - Traffic for top 100,000 sites
- See what links are in Google's [Similar pages](#)
- Look up the page author in Google

Web Evaluation Techniques

STEP BACK & ASK: Does it all add up ?

- Why was the page put on the Web ?
 - inform with facts and data?
 - explain, persuade?
 - sell, entice?
 - share, disclose?
 - as a parody or satire?

- Is it appropriate for your purpose?

Evaluation Criteria

- Authority – is there an author? Is the author qualified?
- Accuracy – is the information reliable? Error free?
- Objectivity – is there bias? Is it trying to sell something?
- Currency – when was it last updated? Are links current?
- Coverage – what topics are covered? What value is the information?

**You may have a Web page
that could be of value to your
research!**

If...

- **Accuracy.** If your page lists the author and institution that published the page and provides a way of contacting him/her and . . .
- **Authority.** If your page lists the author credentials and its domain is preferred (.edu, .gov, .org, or .net), and, . .
- **Objectivity.** If your page provides accurate information with limited advertising and it is objective in presenting the information, and . . .
- **Currency.** If your page is current and updated regularly (as stated on the page) and the links (if any) are also up-to-date, and . . .
- **Coverage.** If you can view the information properly--not limited to fees, browser technology, or software requirement, then . . .