

# Using the Internet for Research

The Internet allows you to get recent information from a variety of good sources. The Internet also sticks you with useless information from dubious places. Searching well will help you use the Internet effectively.



## **KNOW WHAT THE INTERNET DOES BEST**

The Internet is an excellent source of practical, current information. It is a good source of;

- Business and stock information
- Consumer information
- Popular culture
- Electronic ready reference
- Statistical information
- Scientific and medical information

The Internet is less effective as a way to find comprehensive information about many academic topics. Many sites provide good information about a topic, but do not provide the scholarly research you need for some assignments.

- Books are often best place to begin research, as they usually provide complete discussions of topics and present different views on a subject.
- Books in the college library provide college-level information.
- Scholarly journals are still the best way to find research information.

## **SEARCH AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE**

- When using a search engine, make your request as specific as possible to limit the number of responses that marginally relate to your subject.
- Use a search engine that ranks by relevance
- If you know them, go to websites that relate to your subjects
- Schools, hospitals and professional organizations are great sources of information. Libraries provide great links to good sites.

- Many scholars argue that funded scholarly research, especially government-funded, should be free to other researchers, so peer-reviewed research information is beginning to appear more frequently on the Internet. See the list of open-access sites at the end of this guide.
- Become familiar with different search engines. Follow their search suggestions. Yahoo is good for information about popular culture. Ask.com provides ways to narrow or expand your search, which helps if you are doing academic research. Meta searchers such as Dogpile access more than one search engine. For information on search engines, go to;

Finding Information on the Internet: A Tutorial—

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

Infopeople: Best Search Tools Chart—

<http://www.infopeople.org/search/chart.html>

## **BE PREPARED TO EVALUATE WHAT YOU GET**

Even a careful search often nets many entries that are marginally related to your topic. You must also select material appropriate for academic use. The Internet is not like a journal; some websites are not edited or evaluated for accuracy. You must be the editor.

How do you evaluate information?

### **How current is it?**

- A site that has not been updated for many months may have outdated information. This is a problem in subjects like science and medicine. Look for a copyright date or date when the information was placed on the site or updated.

### **Who puts out the information?**

- Is the site credited to a person or organization? If not, you cannot verify the site's authority.
- How easily can you tell who is in charge of the site?
- If credited, who is the writer? Does he or she indicate an affiliation with an organization or institution? Does the writer provide a resume? Is there a list of sources used in preparing information? If credited to an organization, do you trust it?
- Does the person or person in charge of the site have the authority to speak on a topic?

### **What is the purpose of the site?**

- Does the site want to educate, present opinions or viewpoints or sell things?
- How much of the site is devoted to advertising?
- How much of the site is devoted to promoting the writer's products and services?
- How much of the site is devoted to opinion rather than facts?

(Kirk)

### **Can you rely on the organization that hosts the site?**

- If you can, you can rely on the material the site provides.
- Government sites provide good statistical information.
- Organizations such as the American Medical Association or the American Geological Society provide good information in their fields.
- College departments often have excellent websites that provide academic material and links to other good sites in their discipline.

For more information on website evaluation, go to;

Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask —  
[www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html)

Evaluating Web Sites—  
[hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/evaluatingweb/index.html](http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/evaluatingweb/index.html)

Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages—  
[www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/webcrit.html](http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/webcrit.html)

Have the best of both worlds; the SCCC library's online databases are available from your home Internet terminal. These databases are selected to allow academic research. Ask the librarian for access information.

For academic research, try the following sites;

Best Information on the 'Net—[library.sau.edu/bestinfo](http://library.sau.edu/bestinfo)

BUBL LINK – <http://bubl.ac.uk/link>

Digital Librarian – <http://www.digital-librarian.com>

Fathom – <http://www.fathom.com/>

Infomine: Scholarly Internet Resource Collections – <http://infomine.ucr.edu>

Internet Public Library—[www.ipl.org](http://www.ipl.org)

Internet Scout Project—[scout.wisc.edu/](http://scout.wisc.edu/)

Intute—[www.intute.ac.uk](http://www.intute.ac.uk)

Librarian's Index to the Internet – <http://lii.org>

Martindale's "The Reference Desk" – <http://www.martindalecenter.com>

Voice of the Shuttle – <http://vos.ucsb.edu>

Yale Library Research Guides by Subject – <http://www.library.yale.edu/guides>

### **Open Access Journals**

Biomed Central - [www.biomedcentral.com](http://www.biomedcentral.com)

CRISP: Current Research in Social Psychology—  
[www.uiowa.edu/~grpproc/crisp/crisp.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~grpproc/crisp/crisp.html)

Current Psychology Letters—[cpl.revues.org](http://cpl.revues.org)

Directory of Open Access Journals—[www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)

Electronic Journals and Open Access—<http://nmlm.gov/rsdd/ejournals/>

Journal of Medical Internet Research - [www.nmir.org](http://www.nmir.org)

New Journal of Physics - [www.iop.org/EJ/njp](http://www.iop.org/EJ/njp)

Open Access Journals in the Field of Education—<http://aera-cr.asu.edu/ejournals/>

Open J-Gate—[www.openj-gate.com](http://www.openj-gate.com)

Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journals -  
[http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/dean/peer\\_reviewed.htm](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/dean/peer_reviewed.htm)

### Work Cited

Kirk, Elizabeth E. "Evaluating Information Found on the Internet."  
<<http://milton.mse.jhu.edu:8001/research/education/net.htm>>  
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