

When to Use the Web

The question of when to use the Web is an important one for students because:

- you want to make the best use of limited time
- you want a good chance of finding material from reliable sources

You will be able to decide when to use the Web if you give some thought to

- why people put material on the Web
- who puts it on
- what kinds of things they put on
- some misconceptions about the Internet

Why Publish on the Web

These are some of the reasons for putting material on the Web:

- Material can be put on, updated, and deleted quickly.
- The potential audience is large and global.
- Businesses want to keep up with the competition.
- The Web is a vibrant forum where ideas can be freely exchanged.

Who Publishes What

The chart on the next page illustrates publishing activity on the Web.

Who Publishes	What They Might Publish on the Web
<p>Associations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafts Association of British Columbia • Registered Nurses Assoc. of BC • Canadian Assoc. of Chiefs of Police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • membership information • purpose and activities • professional literature • contact information • position papers • conference information • standards
<p>Businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maclean's • National Geographic • the Canucks • Nike • Royal Bank 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • product catalogues • schedules • order forms • service contacts • product information • recent articles • company information
<p>Educational and Cultural Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langara College • Smithsonian Institution • the Louvre • Vancouver Art Gallery • UBC Library • Royal Ontario Museum • Vancouver Folk Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calendars • registration information • hours • maps • information about performers • virtual tours • links to subject-related resources
<p>Government Bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Vancouver • Government of Canada • Agriculture Canada • B.C. Ferries • Government of Japan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • laws • statistics • policy • health bulletins • tourist information • agendas • minutes • phone numbers • schedules • reports • names of officials
<p>Individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • almost anybody under the sun • enthusiasts • experts • not-so-experts • the famous • the not-so-famous • authors • musicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opinions • musings • rantings • ravings • how-to information • hobby information • self-promotional clips or excerpts • experiential wisdom
<p>Organizations and Special Interest Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraser Institute • Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute • Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada • Western Canada Wilderness Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • publication lists • full text of publications • profile and activities • information bulletins • links to related sites • papers

Misconceptions about the Web

It's easy to misunderstand what the Web contains and how it works.

Misconception #1: It's all on the Web

Everything in books, magazines and newspapers is not on the Web. In fact, most of what is in libraries has *not* been posted on the Web. Here's why:

- There are costs associated with putting material on the Web – people's time, computer equipment, and copyright fees.
- Copyright laws protect the owners of a large percentage of the world's print and audiovisual publications. Permission or payment is required for the right to put copyrighted material on the Web.

Misconception #2: Everything on the Web is free

In the beginning, the early 1990's, everything was free. Scientist Tim Berners-Lee invented the Web as a way for researchers to make their material available to each other. The Web reflected the spirit of free and open sharing that is characteristic of the academic community.

A vast amount of Web material is still available at no cost because

- the spirit of free exchange lives on
- people, organizations, and businesses want to promote their ideas to as many people as possible worldwide

However, not all information on the Web is free. It costs money and time to compile information and make it accessible. For some businesses, information is their primary product (e.g. the *Globe and Mail*, EBSCO Information Services, etc.). A company might post some information such as the main news stories, a chapter of a publication, some information about an industry, hoping that you will be willing to pay for more.

Misconception #3: It's easy to find what you want on the Web

You may already know that it's not always easy! Here are some reasons why:

- No one is masterminding the organization of the Web
- There isn't one big catalogue of everything on the Web
- No single search engine covers the entire Web
- Web search results can be overwhelming
- Lots of Web material isn't covered by search engines at all
- Material you found yesterday may not be there today

Evaluating Web Resources

Evaluating what we read, see, and hear is not a new challenge. It's something we should all be doing with any information and ideas we encounter, including what we find on the Web.

The ease of Web publishing is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it gives us a wonderful array of material. On the other hand, the quality of this material is totally unpredictable.

It's very difficult for non-experts to assess the reliability of information, and we are all non-experts in most things. Just for a moment, though, focus on an area of interest in which you are something of an expert.

In this area you have a foundation of knowledge that helps you critique new material. For example, if you are a tennis aficionado, you might notice factual errors in a Web document on Wimbledon. You might recognize the document's bias and be able to challenge something it says.

So what can you do about evaluating material in all those areas about which you know very little? You can develop a questioning mindset about the material and its source.

Begin by looking for these basic publication details:

- author
- author affiliation
- publisher
- date the material was written or revised

This information should appear at the beginning or end of the document, but don't be surprised if it isn't there. You might find the publisher or author affiliation by following a link to the home page of the site where the document appears.

Questions to Ask

Continue the evaluation process by wrestling with questions like the ones below. Some suggestions for working on the questions are provided.

What expertise does the author have in the subject area? What bias might the author have?

- use a search engine to try to find information on the author
- look for the author's name in library catalogues and article indexes
- ask your instructor if the author's name is well-known in the field
- contact the author directly

What are the publishing organization's credentials regarding the subject? What bias might the organization have?

- contact the organization
- look up the organization in a directory in a library
- use a search engine to try to find information on the organization
- see if your instructor is familiar with the organization

What seems to be the purpose of the Web document and the site to which it belongs?

- look at its URL (.com, .edu, .gov, .org, etc.)
- try to judge whether the sole purpose of the document is to promote a product or cause

Has the author indicated sources for facts being presented?

- look at the end of the document or in its text for references to sources the author used; check out some of these sources yourself
- think of (or ask a librarian to recommend) other sources that might present the same facts

Does the Web material deal with the topic at a level that suits you and the requirements of your assignment?

- as a point of reference, compare the way the Web document covers the topic with the way your textbook covers it
- consult your instructor

Practice Evaluating Web Resources

The Library's Web-based module *Evaluating Web Resources* is designed to help you evaluate the suitability of Web resources for research papers in an academic setting. It contains self-tests and a couple of quizzes, and takes between 30 and 60 minutes. It can be done on any computer connected to the Internet.

Some instructors are assigning the module to their students, but you are welcome to sign up on your own. We record your marks so that if an instructor did assign it in the future, you would not have to do it again (although you could!).

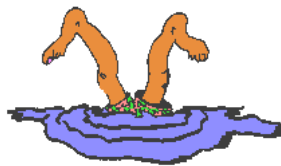
- ▶ Go to the Library Web site: www.langara.bc.ca/library
- ▶ In the **How to** box choose **Evaluate Web Resources** and click on **Go**

Test Yourself

Here are the beginning and end of a Web document. Find these elements:

1. author
2. author affiliation
3. title
4. publisher
5. date the document was revised
6. link to the site's home page

Sink or Swim: Internet Search Tools & Techniques (Version 4.0 - Fall 1999) [Revision information]



By Ross Tyner, M.L.S., Okanagan University College [Copyright statement]

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Search Engines & Subject Directories
 - Search Engines
 - Multi-Threaded Search Engines
 - Subject-specific Search Engines
 - Subject Directories
 - Specialized Subject Directories

Most of this document has been cut out.

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Revision Information:

On the Web since May 1996.

Last major revision October 3, 1999.

Links last checked December 15, 1999.

Okanagan University College Library Home Page

Citing Web Documents

When you tell someone about a Web document, giving its URL is sufficient. To cite it in a paper, however, you need to include more detailed information. In addition to the facts you would include for sources such as books and articles, you also have to indicate where and when you read the document.

Take the information from the document at the time you are using it, paying particular attention to its beginning and end. You may also need to go to the home page of the Web site for some of the information. Many Web documents do not include all of the details you are looking for.

Our example document is pictured on the previous page. We have adapted the formats below from Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines available in April 2005. Ask what style your instructor prefers.

MLA Style

Form: Author, First name. Title. Edition. Date¹. Publisher². Date retrieved <URL>.

Example: Tyner, Ross. Sink or Swim: Internet Search Tools and Techniques.
Vers. 4.0. 3 Oct. 1999. Okanagan UC. 2 Feb. 2000
<<http://www.ouc.bc.ca/libr/connect96/search.htm>>.

APA Style

Form: Author, A.A. (Date)¹. *Title* (edition). Retrieved date, from: URL

Example: Goodall, J. (2000 July). *Cross-Fostering*. Retrieved February 19, 2002, from:
http://www.ethologicaethics.org/cross_fostering.htm

If a document is contained within a large and complex Web site, such as one belonging to a university or a government agency, identify the host organization and the relevant program or department before giving the URL for the document itself.

Form: Author, A.A. (Date)¹. *Title* (edition). Retrieved date, from name Web site: URL

Example: Tyner, R. (1999, October 3). *Sink or Swim: Internet Search Tools and Techniques* (version 4.0). Retrieved February 19, 2001, from Okanagan University College, Library Web site: <http://www.ouc.bc.ca/libr/connect96/search.htm>

Notes:

1. Take "date" to mean date of electronic publication or of the latest update. Use n.d. if you can't find a date.
2. Take publisher to mean the organization most closely associated with the Web site.

In-text or Parenthetical References

References in the text must clearly and, as concisely as possible, point to specific sources in the list of works cited.

When referring to a particular passage in a printed work you would include the page number. However, Web documents usually don't have fixed page numbers. You can't use page numbers of a printout because pagination varies in different printouts.

Here are some ways to refer to material quoted from Web documents:

- use fixed page, section or paragraph numbering if provided
- use the name of a section heading as a marker and count the paragraphs within it
- you can count the paragraphs in the document and refer to them by number if your instructor requires it

For example:

MLA style:	(Tyner, Introduction, para. 3) (Goodall, pars. 3-4)
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APA style:	(Tyner, 1999, Subject Directories, para. 2) (Goodall, 2000, para. 6)
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More About Citing Online Material

For advice on creating citations for other kinds of online material consult the sources listed below.

1. The Langara Library Web site provides examples.

Go to: www.langara.bc.ca/library

In the **How to** box, choose **Cite your sources** and click on **Go!**

2. Printed guides are available at the library reference desk and for circulation.

- College Style Sheet (LB 2369 L36 2005)
- MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th edition. (PE 1478 M57 2003)
- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 5th edition. (BF 76.7 P83 2001)

3. The APA and MLA post examples and style updates on their Web sites.

APA: <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>

MLA: <http://www.mla.org/style>

Choose **Frequently asked questions about MLA style**

Choose **How do I document sources from the World Wide Web etc.**

Formats for citing materials from the Web are still evolving. You may not always find guidelines specific to the kind of material you want to cite. Keep in mind that the intent of the "Works Cited" section of your paper is to give enough information for the reader to locate the works. Do the best you can, and when in doubt, err on the side of more rather than fewer details.