

Writing Skills II

Thinking about Information Sources

Internet Resources & Magazine Articles

Name _____

Date _____

**Austin Community College
Library Services**

8/09
RW

Part I: Internet Resources

Directions for completing this assignment.

You will evaluate the quality of three web sites on a topic listed below.

Step 1: Read the information in this packet thoroughly.

Step 2: Select a topic

Depression	Censorship of Music
Genetically Engineered Foods	Racial Profiling
Cloning	The Electoral College
Universal Health Care	Internet Privacy

Step 3: Go to this web address

<http://library.austincc.edu/WSII-urls.htm>

You will find three web sites under each topic. Go to each of these websites and review the web pages for your topic

Step 4: Complete an evaluation checklist (included in this handout) for each of the web documents listed under your topic.

You can do this from home if you have Internet access.

Step 5: Turn in all 3 of your web document evaluations to your instructor.

Be sure to write your name and the date at the bottom of each checklist.

Thinking about Information Sources

Evaluation of Sources

From finding an automotive repair shop in the yellow pages to locating information on a topic for a school research paper, we rely on good information to answer our questions. Prior to the widespread use of computers, locating information took much time and effort. It might have involved calling a friend, going to the library, or sending a letter to request information.

Today, just the opposite is true. We have too much information to sort through rather than too little. Using a computer, we can access government information, magazine articles, telephone listings around the world, and information on almost any topic under the sun. Add television and radio broadcasts to that and we have what's called *information overload*.

With so much information available, we're often tempted to use the first piece of information we come across. It's easier, but in the long run, you run the risk of using questionable or inappropriate information. How do you find good information to answer your question or solve your problem? By closely examining the information to determine if it is useful and reliable.

In this assignment we will focus on online information, that is, information accessed using a computer and the Internet.

Credibility

Credibility relates to whether the author and publisher of the information seem qualified to write about the topic. A credible information source should:

- give an author's name (many Internet sources do not),
- list the author's credentials (why the author is qualified to write on this topic) and,
- give background information on the organization publishing the information.

While the credentials are important, it doesn't mean a source is correct. It's just one indication that the information may be reliable.

Point of view or bias

Information can express an opinion or a bias toward one side of an issue or the other. Having a point of view is not necessarily bad, but the bias is not always obvious. The easiest way to determine the point of view is by what the author says. Another way is to look at who is publishing the information. For example, an article on gun control published by the National Rifle Association is probably biased against gun control. To detect bias,

- carefully read what the author says, and
- determine who is hosting the web site (try clicking on "about us" or "home" links if the information is not obvious.)

Currency

When we are researching science topics, social issues, current business or government information, or gathering statistics, it is important to know when the information was published and if the information has been updated. To determine the publishing date, look

- at the beginning or end of the page for a publication date.
- for a "last updated" date at the bottom of a web page.
- for a "posted" date at the bottom of the web page.

If you cannot find when the information was published or posted, you should question the reliability of this information source.

Accuracy

The most important question in the end is whether or not the information is correct. There's a good chance you don't really know. After all, you're in school to learn this stuff so how can you tell? Start by determining:

- if the writer is relating a personal experience (subjective information) or using outside information (objective information) that covers a broader approach or a combination of subjective and objective;
- if there is a bibliography, references or a works cited list which indicates the writing is based on research, and
- if hard facts are used, where they came from.

Be skeptical. Make the authors prove their points.

Your topic _____
Title of web page _____

Author (if given) _____
Web address (URL) _____

Brief summary of contents: _____

1. **Credibility:** It is important to know who is publishing this information. It might be an individual or an organization or a company. By gathering information about the author, we can better determine if the information is credible.

What type of web site is this? _____ .edu _____ .gov _____ .com _____ .org _____ other

Is there an author listed? _____ yes _____ no _____ can't tell

If so, are there any credentials given? _____ yes _____ no _____ can't tell

Is the web page from _____ an organization? _____ an individual? _____ can't tell

If an organization, what can you tell about it? (Look for a link to their homepage or to an "about us" page.) _____

2. **Point of View:** Information is not always factual or objective. Information is often published to persuade you about an idea or a product. Sometimes information is personal and can take the form of a story or personal information. Often it is a combination of these.

Does the information appear to be mostly (check one) _____ factual? _____ an advertisement?
_____ an opinion? _____ a personal story?

What clues helped you determine this? _____

Are there references or links to information that the author used? _____ yes _____ no

3. **Currency:** Information on the Internet may be outdated. Depending on your topic, something posted two years ago may no longer be valid or up-to-date.

Can you tell when the information was published? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, what is the date it was posted? _____

Can you tell if the document has been updated? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, when was it updated? _____

Accuracy: Ultimately, the quality of information is best determined by your needs. Is this a reliable information source? Give your reasons below.

Your topic _____
Title of web page _____

Author (if given) _____
Web address (URL) _____

Brief summary of contents: _____

4. **Credibility:** It is important to know who is publishing this information. It might be an individual or an organization or a company. By gathering information about the author, we can better determine if the information is credible.

What type of web site is this? _____ .edu _____ .gov _____ .com _____ .org _____ other

Is there an author listed? _____ yes _____ no _____ can't tell

If so, are there any credentials given? _____ yes _____ no _____ can't tell

Is the web page from _____ an organization? _____ an individual? _____ can't tell

If an organization, what can you tell about it? (Look for a link to their homepage or to an "about us" page.) _____

5. **Point of View:** Information is not always factual or objective. Information is often published to persuade you about an idea or a product. Sometimes information is personal and can take the form of a story or personal information. Often it is a combination of these.

Does the information appear to be mostly (check one) _____ factual? _____ an advertisement?
_____ an opinion? _____ a personal story?

What clues helped you determine this? _____

Are there references or links to information that the author used? _____ yes _____ no

6. **Currency:** Information on the Internet may be outdated. Depending on your topic, something posted two years ago may no longer be valid or up-to-date.

Can you tell when the information was published? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, what is the date it was posted? _____

Can you tell if the document has been updated? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, when was it updated? _____

Accuracy: Ultimately, the quality of information is best determined by your needs. Is this a reliable information source? Give your reasons below.

Your topic _____

Title of web page _____

Author (if given) _____

Web address (URL) _____

Brief summary of contents: _____

7. **Credibility:** It is important to know who is publishing this information. It might be an individual or an organization or a company. By gathering information about the author, we can better determine if the information is credible.

What type of web site is this? ____ .edu ____ .gov ____ .com ____ .org ____ other

Is there an author listed? ____ yes ____ no ____ can't tell

If so, are there any credentials given? ____ yes ____ no ____ can't tell

Is the web page from ____ an organization? ____ an individual? ____ can't tell

If an organization, what can you tell about it? (Look for a link to their homepage or to an "about us" page.) _____

8. **Point of View:** Information is not always factual or objective. Information is often published to persuade you about an idea or a product. Sometimes information is personal and can take the form of a story or personal information. Often it is a combination of these.

Does the information appear to be mostly (check one) ____ factual? ____ an advertisement?
____ an opinion? ____ a personal story?

What clues helped you determine this? _____

Are there references or links to information that the author used? ____ yes ____ no

9. **Currency:** Information on the Internet may be outdated. Depending on your topic, something posted two years ago may no longer be valid or up-to-date.

Can you tell when the information was published? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, what is the date it was posted? _____

Can you tell if the document has been updated? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, when was it updated? _____

Accuracy: Ultimately, the quality of information is best determined by your needs. Is this a reliable information source? Give your reasons below.

Your topic _____

Title of web page _____

Author (if given) _____

Web address (URL) _____

Brief summary of contents: _____

10. **Credibility:** It is important to know who is publishing this information. It might be an individual or an organization or a company. By gathering information about the author, we can better determine if the information is credible.

What type of web site is this? ____ .edu ____ .gov ____ .com ____ .org ____ other

Is there an author listed? ____ yes ____ no ____ can't tell

If so, are there any credentials given? ____ yes ____ no ____ can't tell

Is the web page from ____ an organization? ____ an individual? ____ can't tell

If an organization, what can you tell about it? (Look for a link to their homepage or to an "about us" page.) _____

11. **Point of View:** Information is not always factual or objective. Information is often published to persuade you about an idea or a product. Sometimes information is personal and can take the form of a story or personal information. Often it is a combination of these.

Does the information appear to be mostly (check one) ____ factual? ____ an advertisement?
____ an opinion? ____ a personal story?

What clues helped you determine this? _____

Are there references or links to information that the author used? ____ yes ____ no

12. **Currency:** Information on the Internet may be outdated. Depending on your topic, something posted two years ago may no longer be valid or up-to-date.

Can you tell when the information was published? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, what is the date it was posted? _____

Can you tell if the document has been updated? ____ yes ____ no

If yes, when was it updated? _____

Accuracy: Ultimately, the quality of information is best determined by your needs. Is this a reliable information source? Give your reasons below.

Part II: Magazine Articles

Directions for completing Part II of this assignment.

In Part I of this assignment you used the World Wide Web to find information. In this part you will use an online source, but it will be a “private” database from the ACC library. This database has magazine articles that are not available on the web. These have a more consistent level of quality.

You will evaluate the quality of two magazine articles on the same topic you chose in Part I.

Depression	Censorship of Music
Genetically Engineered Foods	Racial Profiling
Cloning	The Electoral College
Patient's Rights	Internet Privacy

Step 1: Access the periodical index, *Academic Search Complete*

On the computers in the libraries:

- Go to the ACC Library homepage: <http://library.austincc.edu>
- Click on “Articles & Research.” Then click on “A-Z List of Resources.”
- Click on *Academic Search Complete*.
- Perform a keyword search on your topic. Ask the librarian for help if you are having problems with your search.
- Print out two articles on your topic.

Step 2: Complete an evaluation checklist (included in Part I of this packet) for two magazine articles.

Step 3: Turn in both of your magazine evaluation checklists and your magazine articles to your instructor.

Be sure to write your name and the date at the bottom of each checklist.

*If you would like to access *Academic Search Complete* from home, you will use your ACC eID.

Looking at an article using *Academic Search Complete*

The screenshot shows the EBSCO Academic Search Complete interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'New Search', 'Publications', 'Subject Terms', 'Cited References', and 'More'. The search bar contains the text 'censorship of music' and has 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Basic Search', 'Advanced Search', 'Visual Search', 'Search History/Alerts', and 'Preferences'. The main content area shows search results for '2 of 185' items. The first result is highlighted, showing the following information:

- Title:** Green Day Go Number One Without the Help of Walmart.
- Authors:** Browne, David
- Source:** Rolling Stone; 6/25/2009 Issue 1081, p14-14, 1/3p
- Document Type:** Article
- Subject Terms:** *RETAIL trade, *CENSORSHIP, *ROCK music, WAL-Mart Stores Inc., UNITED States, 2001-2010
- Geographic Terms:** UNITED States
- Company/Entity:** WAL-Mart Stores Inc., DUNS Number: 051957769 Ticker: WMT
- Reviews & Products:** 21ST Century Breakdown (Music)
- People:** GREEN Day (Performer), ARMSTRONG, Joe
- Abstract:** The article describes how the rock band Green Day managed to reach the top of the *music* charts without selling its album "21st Century Breakdown" through Wal-Mart, the largest physical *music* retailer in the U.S. Joe Armstrong, the lead singer and guitarist for the group, discusses how the band refused to create an edited version of the album for Wal-Mart. It is estimated that Green Day lost some 100,000 in compact disc sales in order to keep its creative freedom intact.

Annotations on the screenshot include:

- An arrow pointing to the 'HTML Full Text' link with the text 'Click to get full text of article'.
- An arrow pointing to the title with the text 'Title of article'.
- An arrow pointing to the author with the text 'Author of article'.
- An arrow pointing to the source information with the text 'Name of publication; date of article; length of article.'
- An arrow pointing to the abstract with the text 'Summary of article'.

Writing Skills II: Evaluation Checklist for Magazine Articles

Your topic _____
Title of article _____
Author _____
Title of publication _____
Publication date _____

1. **Credibility.** Magazine articles tend to be more credible because an editor has usually checked the facts. Still, it's important to look at the writer or reporter's credentials and the type of magazine in which the article appears.

Is there an author listed? _____ yes _____ no _____ can't tell

If so, are there any credentials given? _____ yes _____ no _____ can't tell

What can you tell about the audience for this magazine (who reads it?)

2. **Point of view.** Magazines and newspapers often publish opinions, commentaries, essays and editorials where individuals share their point of view on a topic.

Does the information appear to be _____ factual? _____ an advertisement? _____ an opinion?
_____ a personal story?

What clues helped you determine this? _____

3. **Currency.** Magazines and newspapers are good sources for information on current issues. An article published three or four years ago may not be sufficiently up-to-date for your needs.

What is the date of the article? _____

Given the topic you chose, in your opinion, is the information current enough?

4. **Accuracy.** Ultimately, the quality of information is best determined by your needs. Does the information seem accurate to the best of your knowledge? Why?

Is this a reliable information source? Give your reasons below.

Name _____

Date _____

Writing Skills II: Evaluation Checklist for Magazine Articles

Your topic _____

Title of article _____

Author _____

Title of publication _____

Publication date _____

1. **Credibility.** Magazine articles tend to be more credible because an editor has usually checked the facts. Still, it's important to look at the writer or reporter's credentials and the type of magazine in which the article appears.

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Is this a reliable information source? Give your reasons below.

Name _____

Date _____

WRITING SKILLS II
LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE

Fill out this questionnaire after you have finished the Library Assignment and then give it to your teacher. Your teacher will send it to Frank Cronin at the Northridge Campus.

Please write complete detailed answers.

1. Was any part of the assignment confusing? If so, which part was confusing and why was it confusing?

2. Before this assignment were you familiar with the meaning of different domain names such as **.gov**, **.edu**, **.org**, and **.com**?

3. Were you already familiar with the on-line full-text periodical index called *Academic Search Complete*? Which topic did you choose and what were the titles of your two articles?

4. As part of the assignment you used checklists to evaluate on-line sources and magazine sources. In what ways were the checklists helpful to you? Were the checklists confusing in any way?

5. Class section number: _____

Name _____

Date _____