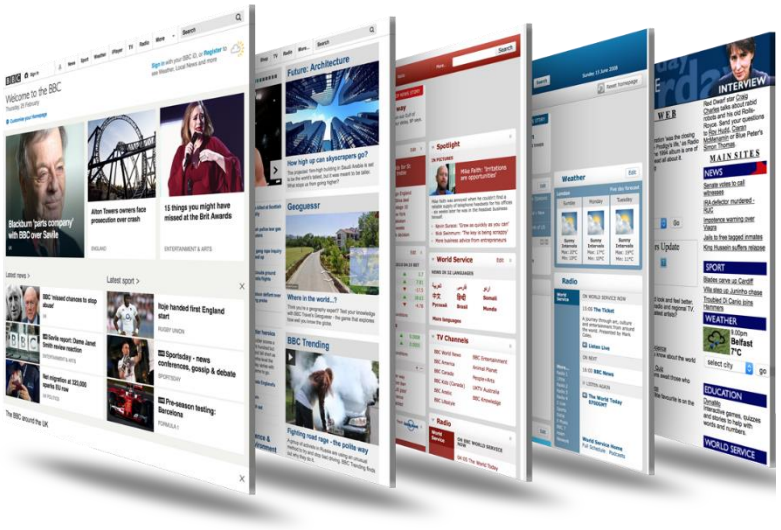
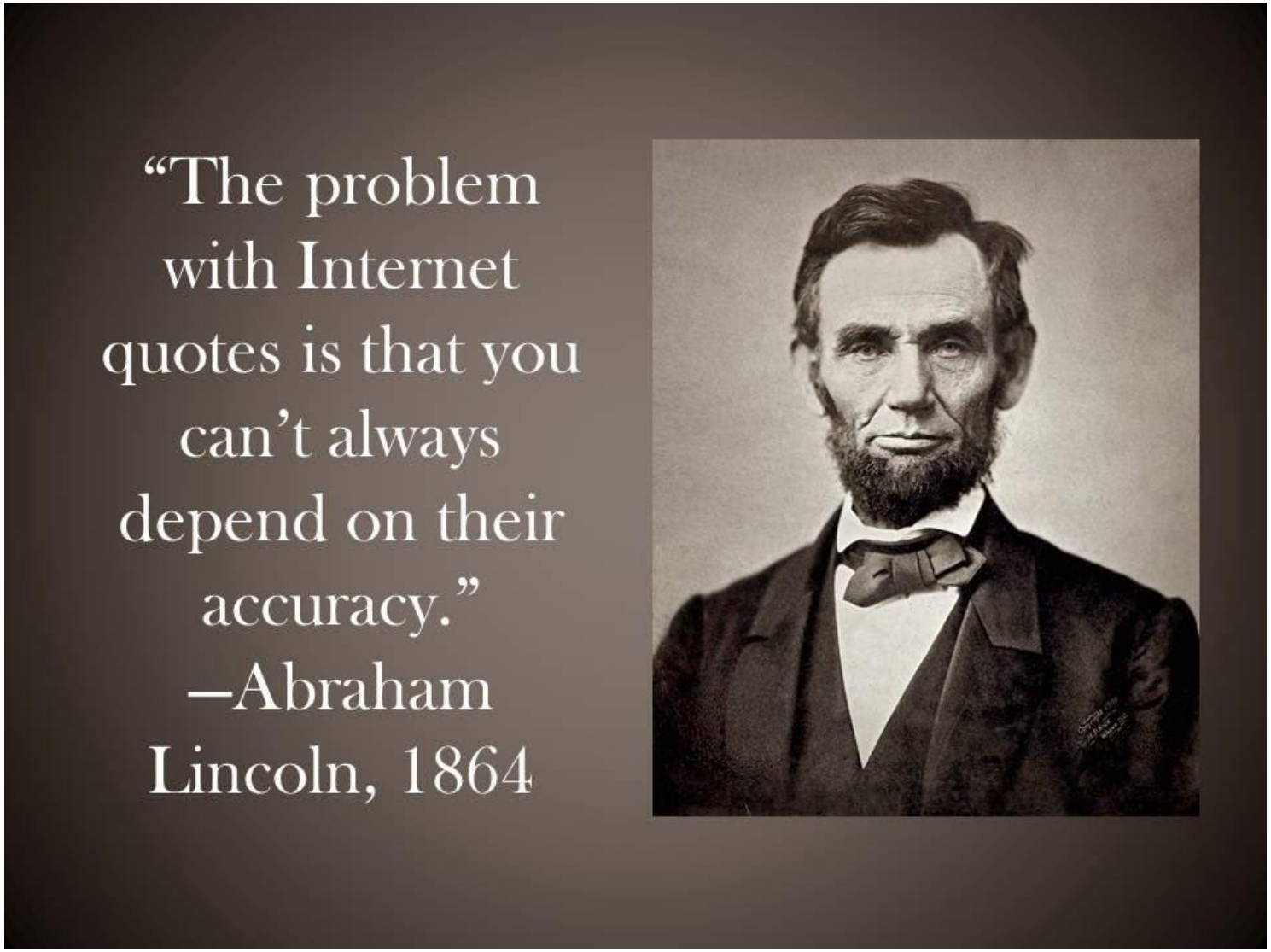
Evaluating Sources





Tips for evaluating websites

Evaluating web pages requires three actions:

- Be suspicious
- Think critically about every page you find
- Constantly consider your intended use of the web

Look for the author's name near the top or the bottom of the page. If you can't find a name, look for a copyright credit (©) or link to an organization

Look for biographical information or the author's affiliations (university department, organization, corporate title, etc.). Their background information should be related to the topic of the page in some way.

Look for an email link, address, or phone number for the author. A responsible author should give you the means to contact him/her.

When evaluating an information source, ask yourself:

Is it CRAAP?

Is it **C**urrent?

Is it **R**elevant?

Who is the **A**uthor?

Is it **A**ccurate?

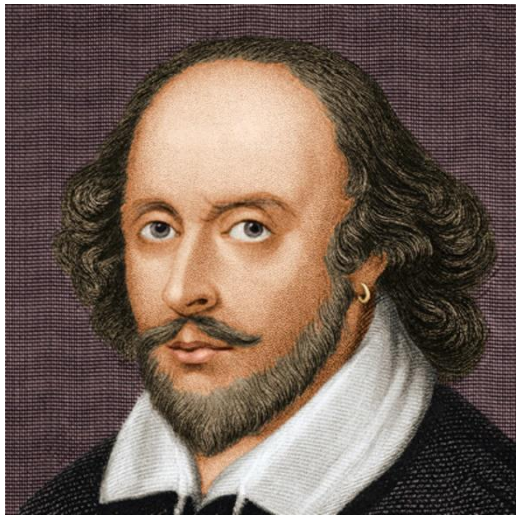
What is the **P**urpose?

Is it **Current**?

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out of date for your topic?
- Are the links functional?

In medicine, science, technology and business currency of information is very important (no older than 3 years)

In some fields like history and literature, age of materials is not necessarily as important



Aid Is Getting to Puerto Rico. Distributing It Remains a Challenge.

By JACK HEALY, FRANCES ROBLES and RON NIXON OCT. 3, 2017

« Return to A to Z: Librarian Approved Sites

Art

Artcyclopedia

A search engine for locating artists, art news, museums, masterpieces, galleries and more.

Art History Resources

Well-structured overview of art history from ancient times to 21st century; time line, searchable by country and genre. Contains Western, African, Chinese, Japanese, Indian artists and images.

ArtSource

A gathering point for networked resources on Art and Architecture including links for journals, images, events, museums, media and other topics of interest.

Google Images

An easy method for finding pictures of artists, periods, or collections.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum's informative web site.

National Gallery of Art

Features over 100 images from the Gallery's collection, along with basic information on the works.

Smithsonian Institution's Collections Search Center

Smithsonian Museum's site, offering access to images, archives, libraries.

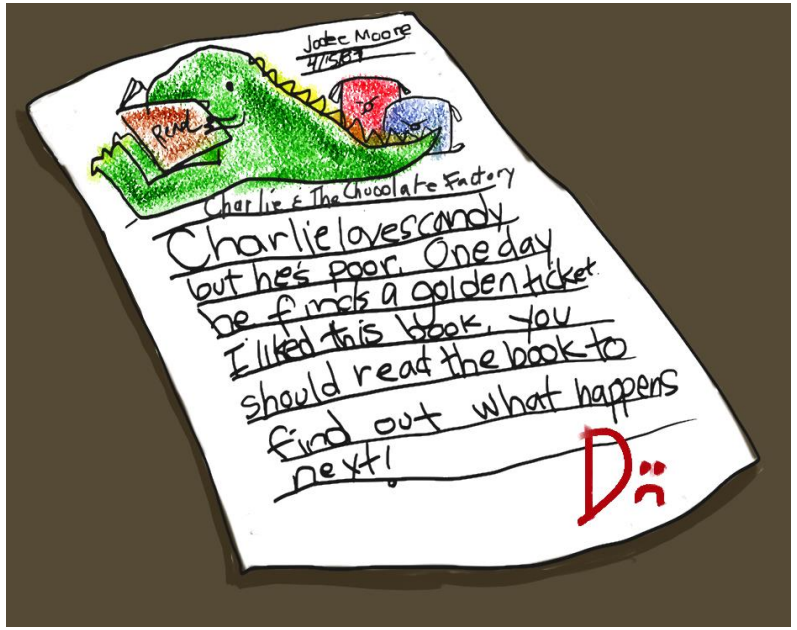
Last updated March 13, 2017

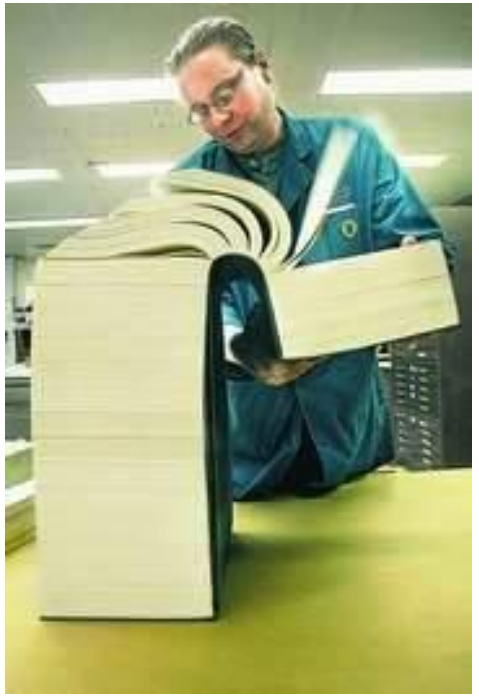
Is it **Relevant**?

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before choosing this one?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?
- Is the information at an appropriate level?

Is the site appealing to a general user, an enthusiast, or an expert?

Is it too simplistic or too in depth for your assignment?



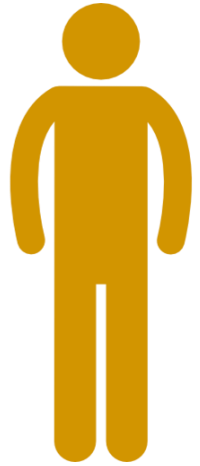


Who is the Author?

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?

  If so, what are they?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

If the author is a single person, consider



- What are his/her credentials?
- Does he/she have sufficient expertise to speak on the subject?
- What is the author’s occupation?
- What is the author’s level of education?
- Is the author affiliated with an institution or organization?

If the author is an organization or a company, consider

- Who are the leaders?
- What is the mission of the organization?
- Is it a local, state, national or international institution?
- What is its membership?
- Is it endorsed by or affiliated with other organizations?
- Does it have a “parent” organization?

Check the home page to make sure it has a postal address and phone number, if not it is likely not credible.

Look for product advertising—it can reveal what is important to the organization.

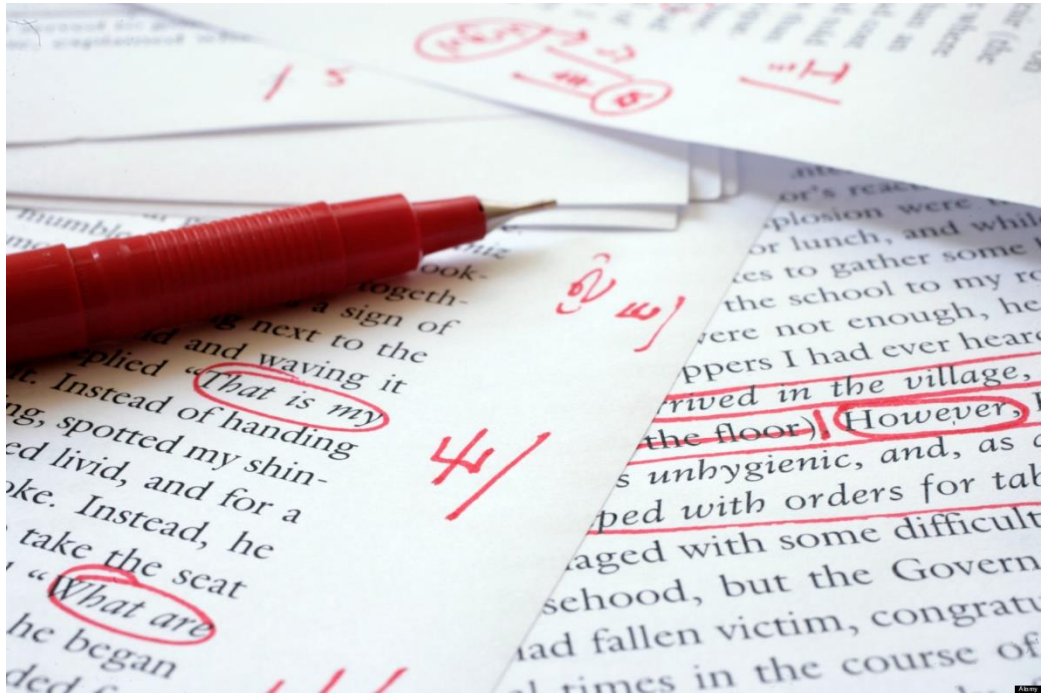
Common Domain Names

- **.edu** – education sites (typically colleges and universities) be sure the author has clearly identified themselves—could be a professor's page **or** a student's page—it is not automatically reliable
- **.gov** – US government sites, both federal and state
- **.org** – organizational sites—can be published by any organization
- **.com** – commercial sites—this is the most common type of domain companies selling things will use this domain but it is also used by news organizations. Can be used by anyone
- **.net** – originally used for network providers, can now be used by anyone. Often used by if .com is already taken
- **info** – allegedly for sites with information, but anyone can register

Is it **Accurate**?

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by **evidence**?
- Has the information been **reviewed** or **refereed**?
- Can you **verify** any of the information in another source?
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?

In the academic world, **peer review** is the process by which research is evaluated by a group of experts in the appropriate field. It must be approved and verified as true, original research by these experts before it is published.



Reputable news sources will adhere to a code of ethics

Society of Professional Journalists

- Seek Truth and Report It
- Minimize Harm
- Act Independently
- Be Accountable and Transparent

Editors will verify and fact check information

What is the Purpose?

- What is the purpose of the information?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

Questions to keep in mind as you seek indicators of bias:

- What is the author's political point of view?
- What does the author stand to gain?
- Who is paying for the website?
- Does the author present alternate points of view?
- If so, are those views presented objectively, or with scorn?