Evaluating Internet Sources for Documentation

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Why have Quality Standards?

- The Internet contains web pages from youngsters as well as world-class experts.
- Just like the print medium, students need to know how to distinguish quality from quantity.
- Standards to determine quality of a source prepares students for college and beyond.
NO use of web pages that come from discussion groups.

NO use of web pages that come from chat rooms.

NO use of comments posted on blogs.

NO use of web pages where the author is a student in grade school, high school or college.

No use of Wikipedia.
Preferred Sites

- Web Pages sponsored by one of the following:
  - Author’s official copyrighted website
  - Government institution
  - Major educational institution
  - Recognized book publishing company
 Preferred Sites

- Web Pages sponsored by one of the following:
  - Reputable journalistic organization (*New York Times, etc.*)
  - Online library maintained by government agencies, colleges, universities (*Library of Congress*)
  - Recognized online encyclopedia (*not Wikipedia*)
Problem Sites

- IMDb.COM
- GOODREAD.COM
- FREEBASE.COM
- TRUEKNOWLEDGE.COM
- Unauthorized Encyclopedias
Determining Credibility

- **Examine the site**
  - What is the site?
  - Who sponsors the site?
  - Where does their data come from?
  - Click on “About Us” and read their background
Example: IMDb.com

- By clicking on “site index”, then “FAQ”, then the question “What is IMDb?” and “How do you get your info?”, the following is revealed:
  - This site started as a hobby project for movie fans
  - It is not mean to be an academic record
  - Site info can come from “you”
Anyone can add/delete/correct info

There is no citation of the biographical info

Statement on website: “By the action of sending information to the IMDb, YOU declare that the submitted data is correct to the best of your knowledge.”

Also stated on site: “When site staff is verifying, they state they prefer Internet sources such as Wikipedia.”
Things to Avoid

- Don’t simply “google” for biographical data and other facts
- Don’t just “assume” the site is legitimate
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Have questions?

Contact State Speech & Debate Director
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