

Internet Basics

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a network of computers, joined by telecommunications lines like fiber optics and broadband. No one owns it and no one controls it. Anyone with a connection to the World Wide Web through browser and server software can access it and add things to it. This means that in many cases NO ONE is editing the information found there.

What's on the Internet?

Things like personal webpages and corporate websites are available and free on the Internet. In addition, many things that aren't free are on the Internet simply as a vehicle of transfer. For example, many library databases such as Ebscohost are housed on the Internet, but aren't freely available to the public. It's important to understand the distinction between **free on the Internet** and **available via the Internet**.

How can I tell what's what?

It's not easy. All websites have an Internet address, which is also known as a URL. URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. For example, www.iusb.edu is a URL. The domain name can help you to determine what kind of a site you're at. The .something in the domain name stands for the type of entity that registered that URL. Here are some examples:

.com	Commercial	.mil	US Dept of Defense
.edu	Educational	.museum	Museums
.gov	US Government	.net	Networks
.int	International Organizations	.org	Organizations

Countries also have domain names. For example, Australia is .au and .fr is France.

Reading the domain name can help you to decide if a site is legitimate, but even that is not foolproof.

On the reverse side are some guidelines that should help you to evaluate source that you find on the Internet. Happy surfing!

Evaluating Internet Information

1. *Who?*

Who wrote what I am reading?

Who maintains the Internet site?

Who would accept this information as authoritative (e.g. my professor; my friends; Mom; etc.)

2. *What?*

What kind of Internet site is it: educational (.edu); business (.com); organization (.org); someone's personal homepage?

What exactly am I reading (e.g. a research article; an editorial; some gossip; etc.)?

Does it match my research need?

3. *Where?*

Where exactly did I find this information, and can I get back there again?

Where are the credentials of the author, or of the people responsible for the Internet site?

4. *When?*

When was what I am reading on the Internet today originally written?

When was the last time this Internet site was updated?

5. *Why?*

Why was this specific information put on the Internet (e.g. general information; selling you a product; enlisting support; etc.)?

Why was searching the Internet better than using print sources, (besides being more fun and taking side trips to irrelevant, but interesting, Internet sites)?

6. *How?*

How can I cite this information?

How accurate and up to date is the information I am reading?

How well organized and written is what I am reading?

If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. Please contact Julie Elliott at 520-4410 for assistance.