

## Criteria for evaluating Web sites

Web sites may be evaluated using the following criteria:

**Ownership:** Sites which do not make this information clear should not be trusted. The author could be anybody. Although corporate owners can be biased, their intentions are usually clear.

**Authority:** If the user cannot trust the author or the corporate body who published the site, then they should not use the information.

**Currency:** a site that is no longer being updated, including the hyperlinks, should not be trusted. The information may be incorrect.

**Quality of content:** Judging quality can be difficult, especially in pages that appear plausible. On closer inspection the searcher may find there are no supporting data for opinions or facts. Content can be biased in a number of ways (as in any publication), for example, political, academic (that is, supporting only one school of thought), commercial and so on.

**Intended audience:** Information should be at the right level.

The criteria can be judged by the searcher considering the following questions:

### *Ownership*

1. Is it clear who is the author of the site/page?
2. Is there a corporate owner of the information?
3. Are there contact details for the page owner?

### *Authority*

1. What authority does the author possess?
2. Was the searcher made aware of the site from a reliable source?

### *Currency*

1. How up to date is the information?
2. Are the Web links on the page working?

### *Quality of content*

1. Are claims supported by reliable evidence?
2. What is the quality of the use of language and grammar?
3. Do Web links lead to high-quality and reliable sites?
4. Is the information biased in any way?

### *Intended audience*

1. Who is the intended audience?
2. Is the site a vehicle for commercial promotional material?
3. Does the site include advertising?
4. Are you being asked for money?

**The main point is to be critical.**