Information Literacy
How to choose the best sources for your research and information needs.
Created by Chris Labuda

Why Information Literacy is Important
In today’s world we are used to information hitting us from every direction—people, social media, television, radio, classes, work—the list seems endless. Throughout your life you will find lots of information from lots of different places. Being able to tell good information from bad is a useful life skill.

Understanding what good information is and where to find it is a skill everyone should have in today’s information packed world. It will help you be a better professional and citizen, and make more informed decisions.

The Librarian and Faculty Role in Information Literacy
Librarians have been trained to recognize good information resources. They can help students figure out what websites are reliable. Faculty members have dealt with many information resources throughout their education and career—they can also help students in finding good resources.

Evaluating Website Types
.COM
This is the internet domain for businesses, news sites, social media, or specific service. Students should look at .com websites with a critical eye. These websites may be trying to sell you specific goods, services, or viewpoints.

.NET
These are the same as .com sites.

.ORG
This is the website domain for non-profit organizations. There are many .org websites that provide good information; however, there can be non-profits that are biased in their world/religious/scientific views. Additionally, some for-profit organizations use the .org domain as well. You should carefully examine .org websites for any biases.

.INT
This is the domain for international organizations that are endorsed by an agreement between countries. An example of this would be The World Health Organization (WHO) at http://www.who.int

.EDU
This domain is assigned to educational institutions. Typically, web domains with .edu are considered to have good information; however, some .edu websites may be privately owned
student or faculty pages. If so, they could contain information that is based on opinion instead of fact. If you are unsure of the site's accuracy check with your instructor or a librarian.

**.GOV & .MIL**

These domains are assigned to various levels of government websites (Federal, State, and Local). These also include the different branches of the US military (Army, Navy, Marines, and National Guard). Such sites are highly recommended for academic or professional research projects. Their information is some of the best you can find.

Central Michigan University, 2013

**Wikipedia**
The Free Encyclopedia

Wikipedia is a well-known and popular resource that people use for general knowledge; however, you shouldn’t use it for academic or professional research. Anyone can change information on Wikipedia, so you can’t be sure that the information is true and accurate. Wikipedia is a great place to gather general information and common knowledge, just not for academic and professional information.

**Evaluation of Individual Websites**

Finding good information requires critical thinking. There are several things you should consider when looking for good information.

**Factors to Consider**

- Who is the creator? (Google the author/organization if you haven’t heard of them.)
- Are they qualified to give you this information? Some websites aren’t accredited but are still reliable. Check with your instructor or a librarian if you are unsure.
- When was the website created? Last updated? What is the copyright date? You want your information to be as recent as possible.
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the website trying to sell anything or persuade readers to a specific point of view?
- Does the information present all points of view without bias or in a way that won’t make people feel strong emotions?