

# EVALUATING INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNET

So much information is available on the internet. It is a useful tool, but should be treated the same as any other book, magazine or database you use for your research. Be critical about what you use and how you use it.

## THE 'FREE WEB' VERSUS THE 'DEEP WEB'

When you use a search engine such as Google you are searching the Free Web. Google and other search engines collect data by use of spiders that trawl over the free web.

The Deep Web is hundreds of times larger than the Free Web. This material cannot usually be found by search engines such as Google.

What would you expect to find on the Deep Web? The material found here is not indexed by search engines, e.g. library databases and pages that belong to private networks and organisations. Therefore, you need to become familiar with the Library's databases, where a your College Google account gives you access to material you will not find on the Free Web.

## BECOME A CRITICAL RESEARCHER ON THE FREE WEB

Of course you want to use the information found on the Internet. A few quick tips will make sure you are using reliable and accurate information.

Before starting to read or download information check the URL of the source. The domain will tell you if it is a more likely to be a reliable place for you to search. For example the following domains can usually be trusted:

- .edu Educational institutions
- .gov Government
- .org Organisation or association

If you saw the domain .com this would tell you straight away that this is a commercial site and any information found here should be treated with caution. Commercial organisations primary goal is to be profitable, not to be accurate.

## EVALUATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The same as other information you find on the internet, information from artificial sources must be critically evaluated.. One difference though is that you can ask generative text AI to help you with this using the following checklist and comparative sources.

Apply the following checklist to what you use online

### **AUTHORITY**

- Who is responsible for the page? Why has the site been created?
- Check the "About Us" link.
- Can you contact the site online, or via an address if you require additional information
- Is the site or the person writing the material qualified to write about the topic?

### **ACCURACY**

- Can you verify that factual or statistical information found on the site?
- Is it very clear who is responsible for the accuracy of the information?
- If it includes statistical information in a graph or chart, is it easy to understand with clear labels and headings?
- When you check with other print and online sources does there appear to be mistakes in the data on the site?

### **OBJECTIVITY**

- Is the information provided free as a public service?
- Is it free of advertising?
- If the site does include advertising is it separate from the main information presented on the page?
- Is it free from bias? Who has created the site and for what purpose?

### **CURRENCY**

- Can you verify when the page was written?
- When the page was first placed on the web?
- If the page has been revised, updated or edited?
- Are there any dead links on the page?
- Is there any other way to check if the material is updated frequently?

### **COVERAGE**

- Is the page completed or does it appear to be still under construction?
- If there is a print equivalent to the Web page, does it indicate that the online version is a complete or abridged version?
- Does it cover the subject adequately?