

USING THE INTERNET TO FIND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION & AVOIDING MISINFORMATION

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OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Describe uses of the Internet
- Evaluate WWW documents using criteria discussed in the session
- Understand some of the limitations of the WWW
- Use a portal and search engine to maximize effective Web searching (other types of search systems will be covered in other presentations)

THE WORLD WIDE WEB- THE INTERNET

The World Wide Web = The Internet

Essentially the same things

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

A portal to the world

A rapid means of locating and retrieving
information

A means of rapid communication

TYPES of WEB SEARCH TOOLS

- General search engines
 - ◆ AltaVista, Lycos, Google
- Multiple search engines
 - ◆ Metacrawler, Dogpile
- Directories
 - ◆ Yahoo, LookSmart

TYPES of WEB SEARCH TOOLS (cont)

- Portals

- ◆ Combination search engine, subject directory, e-mail, chat, etc.

- Subject-specific search directories

- ◆ MedWeb

<http://www.medweb.emory.edu/MedWeb/>

TYPES of WEB SEARCH TOOLS (cont)

- Site-specific search tools
 - ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Databases
 - ◆ MEDLINE, TOXLINE

EVALUATING RESOURCES

■ Rationale

- ◆ Anyone can publish anything on the Web
- ◆ Unlike traditional print resources, web resources rarely have editors or fact-checkers
- ◆ Currently, no web standards exist to ensure accuracy

EVALUATING RESOURCES

■ Authority

- ◆ Who is the author?
- ◆ What is the author's affiliation?
- ◆ Can you contact the author?

■ Objectivity

- ◆ Is the purpose of the site clearly stated?
- ◆ Is sponsorship acknowledged?
- ◆ Is the information impartially presented?

EVALUATING RESOURCES

■ Accuracy

- ◆ Is it reliable and free from error?
- ◆ Is the source of information clearly stated?

■ Coverage

- ◆ Is it complete for the topic and audience?
- ◆ Does the site offer extra features not available in other formats?

EVALUATING RESOURCES

■ Currency

- ◆ When was the information produced?
- ◆ Has it been updated recently?

■ Design

- ◆ Do visual effects enhance the resource?
- ◆ Are there options for text only and non-frames viewers?
- ◆ Are plug-ins needed?

EVALUATING RESOURCES

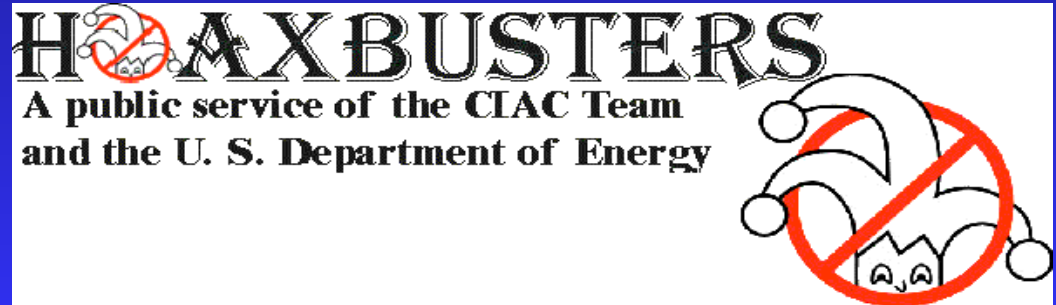
- .com - a commercial site
- .net - a commercial site
- .gov - a US government site
- .org - a non-profit site
- .edu - an academic site
- .mil - a US military site

EVALUATING RESOURCES

- Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Health Information on the Internet
 - ◆ <http://hitiweb.mitretek.org/docs/criteria.html>
- Evaluating Internet Information
 - ◆ <http://www.lib.vt.edu/research/libinst/idle/evaluating.html>
- The Good, The Bad & The Ugly: or, Why It's a Good Idea to Evaluate Web Sources
 - ◆ <http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html>

CONCERNS

- Uncensored content
- Hoaxes, frauds, and “urban legends”
 - ◆ <http://www.urbanlegends.com/>
 - ◆ http://www.cdc.gov/hoax_rumors.htm
 - ◆ <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/HBHoaxCategories.html>



Portals & Search Engines

- Hotbot - www.hotbot.com
- Google search
 - ◆ www.google.com
 - ◆ www.google.com/unclesam
 - ◆ Mercury