

## Research Topics:

# Four Considerations for Web Based Research

### 1. AUTHORSHIP: WHO WROTE THIS?

<b>What your professor wants:</b> Research that is written by experts in the field who stand behind their work.
<b>What to ask:</b> Who wrote this page? What qualifications does the author have? Does someone claim responsibility for this material? Is it someone's blog or personal page?
<b>What to look for:</b> A named author or authors, or an organization that takes responsibility. Read the biography of the author and look for links to other articles the author may have written. Citations and links to sources the author may have used in writing this content. An email address to contact the author or the site publishing the content.

### 2. ORIGINALITY: IS THIS THE AUTHOR'S OWN WORK?

<b>What your professor wants:</b> Information from as close to the source as possible.
<b>What to ask:</b> Is the site a source of original content and viewpoints? Is the site a primary source or a secondary source? If the site is presenting material it gathered from other sources, is the material complete and unaltered? Do I need to continue researching to find the original document presented here?
<b>What to look for:</b> Copyright information. Links to sites that may contain the complete article or document.

### 3. ACCURACY: CAN I TRUST IT?

<b>What your professor wants:</b> Your professor wants your information to be trustworthy and up-to-date.
<b>What to ask:</b> When was the site created? When was the last time it was updated? If the site includes external links, are they working properly? Do they go to live sites? Is the information on the page seem outdated? Do I need the most current information on this topic? If I am looking for current facts or statistics, I probably do.
<b>What to look for:</b> Dates for when the article may have been published and the page may have been updated. Information describing how the material was gathered. Any background information about the information and publication that can also help assess accuracy.

### 4. INTENT: WHAT IS IT TRYING TO DO?

<b>What your professor wants:</b> Your professor wants information to be objective and unbiased.
<b>What to ask:</b> How does the site identify itself? Does it have a particular point of view? Is the material presented by the site fact, opinion, or propaganda? Is it advertising a product? Do you have to pay to get this content?
<b>What to look for:</b> Information about the site itself presented in sections titled "About Us," "Philosophy," or "Background." The site's URL and domain—is the site commercial (i.e., .com) governmental (i.e., .gov), educational (i.e., .edu) or non-profit (i.e., .org)—may also provide information as to its intent.

### WHAT'S WRONG WITH WIKIPEDIA?

There's nothing wrong with Wikipedia, and in fact, it is about as accurate as other Encyclopedias. But a college paper shouldn't cite any encyclopedias. Wikipedia can be a place you start your research, but you should use it find other sources. Because anyone can say anything on Wikipedia, you want to find the original material.
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### A SEARCH IS NOT RESEARCH

For most of us, we answer our questions by using a search engine like Google, Yahoo!, or Bing. These search engines have made life a lot easier, and we do have easy access to an amazing amount of information. But using Google will create problems if you are doing academic research. Now that you are in college, you cannot just repeat what you have found on the web. You have to find information from reliable sources. Using a research database will help you find cutting edge research from reliable professionals.
<b>Search Engines:</b> Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Alta Vista
<b>Research Databases:</b> LexisNexis, Science Direct, EBSCO, Academic One File