

Web site credibility assignment

I want you to evaluate three different pages. Write at least a paragraph for each explaining why each site would not be considered credible or if it would be classified credible. Credibility is usually defined as expertise and trustworthiness. I want you to rank each of the three sites based on presentation, content, and authority. For example, Web site "A" may do well in the content category and get assigned a "1," while Web site "A" may perform poorly in the presentation getting a rank of "3." I also want you to rank the best site overall. Your rankings will be compared to other students in the class. You need at least 1-pg single-spaced page for this assignment.

1. American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation <http://www.no-smoke.org/>
2. Essays on Hamlet <http://www.hamletessays.com/>
3. Zoom Dinosaurs <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/dinosaurs/index.html>

Content

1. Is the page complete or still under construction?
2. What is the title of the page?
3. When was it created, last updated?
4. Who is the audience, is there any obvious bias or slant to the information?
5. Are other sources of information available from the site? Are the links for the site internal or external sources? Linking to credible sources? Do they all work properly?
6. Would you include this site in your bibliography?
7. Is there any bias?
8. Can you distinguish fact from opinion?
9. Was the site created to promote, sell, explain, or inform?
10. Can you search for past content?

Authority

1. Who created the page? What are his/her credentials?
2. Is there a means to contact the author? Email, phone, physical address?
3. What are their associations or affiliations? Does the site make that information clear?
4. Who is sponsoring the site? Is that clearly stated?
5. What does domain name tell you about the site? Is it a .com, .gov, .edu, personal Web page?
6. Can you tell if the site is accurate? Are there references to outside sources of the information?
7. Is there a non-Web version of the site? If not, this is not necessarily a detriment but can add or detract from credibility based on the reputation of the print medium.
8. Are there pictures of real people? Are there photos of authors of content?
9. Does the site link to reputable outside materials?

Presentation

1. Is the site professional looking? Colors? Design principles?
2. Is it free of grammar, spelling and punctuation problems? Is the writing style appropriate for the topic?
3. Is the format of the site meaningful and easy to use? Are there appropriate headings? Does navigation easily help you find information?
4. How do images and sounds work on the site? How do they support the content? Could they have been edited?
5. How did you find the site? Consider how the search engine works?
6. Can you tell if news, editorial, and advertisements have separate presentations on the site?
7. Look at the source code of the site. Is there anything in it that influences your impression? Meta tags, dates, comments, etc.
8. The site has an overabundant amount of advertising? Pop-up ads? Links in content the direct users to ads? Difficultly distinguishing ads from content?
9. The site has very few pages?
10. The site domain does not match name of site?

*Some elements provided by Cindy Royal and Fogg, et al. (2001). "What makes Web sites credible? A report on a large quantitative study." CHI, 3(1), 61-68.