Evaluating websites

The easiest way of evaluating the information you find on websites is to ask yourself the following five questions:

Who

- Who is the author? (does it say?)
  - Are they qualified?
- Who is the sponsor? (i.e. who is paying for the site)
  - Are they reputable / trustworthy?

What

- What topics are covered? (what is not covered?)
- How in-depth is the information?
- How accurate is the information? (not everything on the page will be new to you, does what you are reading tally with what you have read elsewhere?)

Where

- Where is the page from?
- Is there regional bias? (e.g. a page from Britain or America might not be consistent with Australian experiences).

When

- Is the page dated? If so, when was the last update?
- How current are the links? (“dead” links can indicate poor or slow updating)

Why

- What is the purpose of the website?
  - Is it trying to: Sell me something? Persuade me of something? Entertain me? Inform me? Educate me?
  - Is it factual? Or opinion?
- How might the purpose change the information, how the information is presented, or make it biased?
Referencing a website

In-text citation (in the body of your assignment):

Pluto is no longer considered to be a planet (Smith, 2009).

In your reference list (at the end of your assignment):


Tips for finding information:

- The top of the page will often give you sponsor information
- Government websites are sponsored by the Government (State, Federal or Local) and are authored by the department.
- Try looking at the bottom of the page for copyright information – this will often give you the date and author.
- Check to see if the page has ‘contact us’ or ‘about us’ information – this will often give you the author’s details and place of publication.

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