

Module 3 Application

Evaluating Websites Using an Annotated Bibliography or Checklist

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Part 1 Choosing a Subject/Topic

When one is looking at choosing a controversial topic to research they truly do not have to go far; especially when the Internet is involved. While there is certainly no shortage of controversial topics to choose from I wanted to make sure I picked something relevant to what I teach. At the start of each semester of my television and video production class we spend a vast amount of time discussing violence as it shown in media. Media violence is something that I feel once can get a large amount of material on as well. I urge my students to be critical of the things they watch, or are exposed to, but I often forget to educate them on the ways to actively research it on their own.

Part 2 Creating an Annotated Bibliography of Sources

AllPsychOnline. (2017). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://allpsych.com/>

In their own words “AllPsych is one of the largest and most comprehensive psychology websites, referenced by hundreds of colleges and universities around the world” (AllPsychOnline, 2017). It offers a great number of direct routes to an abundance of information. One can find online textbooks, quizzes, and even links to journals on their page without having to go far. The website is managed by Heffner Media Group, a company that focuses on educational material and research methods. The website provides a simple and quick starting point for research. When utilizing the website to research media violence I only found a very limited amount of articles/links. The ones that I did find

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychology. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2017 from

<http://www.aacap.org/>

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychology (AACAP) is an organization that has been around for over 60 years. Their purpose is to ensure that children and adolescents receive the mental health care they need. The organization is comprised of professional medical personnel that all share the common bond: helping young people with mental illnesses. The organization has very outlined bylaws and a code of ethics for members and authors to follow. Throughout the AACAP website there are a great number of subjects that are covered. One has easy access to the search function and links to a variety of external sites as well. An unexpected noticing is that I found pro/con articles about subjects as well. This allows researchers to find both sides of the argument in one location. All the pieces that I observed were either written by doctors after their research, or provided an extensive list of references that all had access to. It is my opinion that the AACAP website is a credible website for people to utilize.

The Hollywood Reporter. (2017). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/>

“The Hollywood Reporter”’s website was another one that I came across in my research. This is a popular website that focuses on media presentation and puts a focus on what mass media is doing. While the results that appeared on the page are current, I found that they had little to no value in my research. The website is more of a fan based site that presents little or no value to actual research. The articles and blog posts that I found did not offer a research based perspective unless they were talking about some other piece of research. In fact, the majority of what was on the website was pop culture focused and

provided almost no relevant information. I would deem this website as not credible for research.

MediaSmarts – Canada’s Centre for Digital and Media Literacy. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2017 from <http://mediasmarts.ca/>

The “MediaSmarts” website is a good example of a website that is user friendly while at the same time it hosts a wealth of valuable information that anyone may be in need of in regards to digital and media literacy. It is run as a non-profit organization that states they “support adults with information and tools to so they can help children and teens develop the critical thinking skills they need for interacting with the media they love”

(MediaSmarts, (n.d.)). While the site may at first seem to be biased I found that the articles referring to media violence were well laid out and supported by research. Each piece I looked at had references available and most addressed different sides of the argument. While some of the authors seem like “normal” people it seems they have done a good job at asserting a statement and supporting it with research. I would deem this as a credible place to research the topic.

ProPublica: Journalism in the Public Interest. (2017). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://www.propublica.org/>

This website is one could definitely deem current in their nature. The website is loaded with material from even today. The material may conflict with other sources, as they seem to follow their own agenda and present material, as they seem fit. Authors are listed as being journalists, but it seems that they carelessly throw information around. The first article that came up on my search had two corrections at the end of it. One of which had a change in the original statistics it presented that was a 47% difference. My

concern would be on the misleading nature that this website may present and then retract after a later date due to differences in statistics. Presenting statistics that far off is very misleading to me, and definitely contributes to my deeming this website not credible for use.

Psychology Today. (2017). Retrieved March 10, 2017 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/>
“Psychology Today” is an online version of the magazine publication. It offers a variety of pieces regarding psychology from a variety of authors. Some have been proven in the field, some a researched based, some are peer reviewed, and some are blog posts that that are updated on a regular basis. One can find a variety of topics that are addressed, and the topic of media violence is covered quite thoroughly. The material is up to date and current. Material that was looked at was relevant to the topic at hand. While looking through the website I noticed that there was material that was clearly research based and supported. The authors of the material have credible backgrounds that are almost always listed for the researcher to find. Some of the material seems to be author’s opinions, but since I deem them credible it is not a big factor to me. I would deem this website as a credible reference tool to research from.

PubMed Central. (n.d.). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>
This a database website ran by the U.S. National Institutes of Health's National Library of Medicine (NIH/NLM) that allows researchers to find any of over 4.2 million articles. It provides an excellent resource for researchers to utilize. It is very up to date with articles from the current year. The resources that are linked within the database are very valuable and credible in my opinion. All of the articles that I found are all referenced and those are available there seem to be have options on both sides of the argument that researchers

can use to formulate their scientific and researched backed opinions. I would encourage anyone to use this website as a reference tool.

The Trace. (2017). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://www.thetrace.org/>

The Trace touts them as a nonprofit source of news. While I am conducting my research I found the website very biased and opinionated. The website is extremely current, but I could rarely find an author for any piece on the website. While they present very interesting point of views there is definitely a tilt to what they say. There is a lot of bias presented and I feel that if they did present an alternate side to the information it was generally in a mocking undertone. Everything is of a general blaming tone and does not show supported research or references. It is almost entirely an opinion piece. It is my evaluation that this would not be a credible website for people to use when looking at media violence, let alone any other information really.

USA Carry. (2015). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <https://www.usacarry.com/>

“USA Carry” is a website that one could come upon quite easily while searching for media violence, and it should be very critically scrutinized. The material that was present, in my opinion, would not be considered current. The website states 2015 as its registry date, and there has been a lot of things that have happened since then. While currency should be mentioned the source of the material is more important. The sources that I came upon would be considered very biased, or non-qualified personnel. Material presented was one sided and did not present conflicting beliefs that may be present. For me this is to sway the reader/researcher to take their side on their opinion without allowing them to see supporting material, which would make them very uniformed in their opinion formation. The article that arouse in my search was written by a former

colonel and was stated in the reference section as being an opinion piece. Not presenting relevant and credible information allows the researcher to determine that this is not a credible source, and I agree with that statement.

Violence Policy Center: Research, Investigation, Analysis & Advocacy for a Safer America.

(2016). Retrieved on March 10, 2017 from <http://www.vpc.org/>

When searching for information on media violence it is almost certain that one would find a website like this one. The title would make any unseasoned researcher think that they have come upon a site with valued and supported information, but that is not the case. While the information may seem current, as the website is listed as being updated in 2016, it does not provide valuable research based material that one should be looking for. Authors can often not be found, and the positions are based almost solely on opinion. It is also important to recognize that the ones that run the website do not list their credentials except in stating the jobs they have held. There is no way to truly determine their credibility. Statistics maybe be added into a piece, but that is only to focus on their point all the while ignoring the other side of the opinion. Websites like this one are deemed not to be credible for research.

Part 3 Applying a Checklist for Website Evaluation

When searching for a website checklist that I deemed a valuable resource there were definitely many that came up via the search. With all of them that came up I found the one at <http://www.schrockguide.net/uploads/3/9/2/2/392267/evalhigh.pdf> the most beneficial for me. Kathy Schrock created it and she has extensive background in technology teaching and evaluation. “Kathy Schrock has been a school district Director of Technology, an instructional

technology specialist, and a middle school, academic, museum, and public library librarian” (Schrock, n.d.). She has numerous accolades and has been involved in numerous technology organizations and has taught collegiately as well. When I came across her checklist I found it to be extremely thorough. I will utilize the checklist to evaluate two of the aforementioned websites (the checklist has been recreated from Schrock’s example)

Website 1 Evaluation

1. What grade level are you in? Graduate School
2. Are you using an iOS or Android tablet? No, laptop
3. What Web Browser are you using? Google Chrome
4. What is the URL of the webpage you are evaluating? <http://mediasmarts.ca/>
5. What is the name of the site? MediaSmarts – Canada’s Centre for Digital and Media Literacy

Part 1: Technical and visual aspects of the page As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.	Yes	No
Does the page take a long time to load?		X
Do any pictures or photographs on the page add to the information?		X
Is the spelling correct on the page?	X	
Are there headings and subheadings on the page?	X	
• If so, are they helpful?	X	
Is the page signed by the author?		X
Is the author's e-mail address included?		X
Is there a date on the page that tells you when it was last updated?	X	
•If so, is it current?	X	
Is the format standard and readable with your browser?	x	

Is there an image map (large clickable graphic with hyperlinks) on the page?		X
Are there advertisements on the page?		X
• If so, are they distracting?	NA	NA
If you have graphics turned off, is there a text alternate to the images?	NA	NA
On supporting pages, is there a link back to the home page?	X	
Are the links clearly visible and annotated or explanatory?	X	
Are there photographs or sound files on the page?		X
• If so, can you be sure that a picture or sound has not been edited?	NA	NA
• If you're not sure, should you accept the information as valid for your purpose?	NA	NA

Summary of Part 1 Using the data you have collected above, write a short statement explaining why you would or wouldn't recommend this site to a fellow student for use in a project.

The only question that I would have about this website would be not listing the author. However, the material that was presented was diligently referenced with clear and concise references. Pictures did not distract from the material and the material was logically presented. It was also current with the times and all information was presented in a logical manner. For those reasons I would deem the article credible for use.

Part 2: Content	Yes	No
As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.		
Is the title of the page indicative of the content?	X	
Is the purpose of the page indicated on the home page?	X	
Can you tell when the document was created?	X	
If there is no date, does the information seem to be current?	NA	NA
Does up-to-date information matter for your purpose?	X	
Is the information on the page/site useful for your purpose?	X	
Would it have been easier to get the information somewhere else?		X

Would information somewhere else have been different? •Why or why not? (Information presented was non-biased and informational in nature)		X
Did the information lead you to other sources, both print and Web, that were useful?	X	
Is a bibliography of print sources included?	X	
Does the information appear biased? (One-sided, critical of opposing views, etc.)		X
Does the information contradict something you found somewhere else?		X
Do most of the pictures supplement the content of the page?	NA	NA

Part 3: Authority As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.	Yes	No
Who created the page?	A Canadian non-profit, charitable organization initially launched by the Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)	
What organization is the person affiliated with?	Information and Communications Technology Council	
Conduct a link: command in a search engine to see who links to this page. Can you tell if other experts in the field think this is a reputable page?	X	
Does the domain of the page (k12, edu, com, org, gov) influence your evaluation?		X
Are you positive the information is valid and authoritative? •What can you do to validate the information? (Check the references and go deeper into the research)	X	
Are you satisfied the information is useful for your purpose? •If not, what can you do next?	X	
If you do a search on the Web on the creator of the page, do you find additional information that shows the Web page author is an expert in the field?	X	

Narrative Evaluation

Reviewing all of the data you have collected above while evaluating the site, explain why this site is (or is not) valid for your purpose. Include the aspects of technical content, authenticity, authority, bias, and subject content.

The “MediaSmarts” website is a good example of a website that is user friendly while at the same time it hosts a wealth of valuable information that anyone may be in need of in regards to digital and media literacy. It is run as a non-profit organization that states they “support adults with information and tools to so they can help children and teens develop the critical thinking skills they need for interacting with the media they love” (MediaSmarts, (n.d.)). While the site may at first seem to be biased I found that the articles referring to media violence were well laid out and supported by research. Each piece I looked at had references available and most addressed different sides of the argument. While some of the authors seem like “normal” people it seems they have done a good job at asserting a statement and supporting it with research. I would deem this as a credible place to research the topic.

Website 2 Evaluation

1. What grade level are you in? Graduate
2. Are you using an iOS or Android tablet? No
3. What Web Browser are you using? Google Chrome
4. What is the URL of the webpage you are evaluating? <http://www.vpc.org/>
5. What is the name of the site? Violence Policy Center: Research, Investigation, Analysis & Advocacy for a Safer America

Part 1: Technical and visual aspects of the page	Yes	No
As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.		
Does the page take a long time to load?		X
Do any pictures or photographs on the page add to the information?		X
Is the spelling correct on the page?	X	
Are there headings and subheadings on the page?	X	
• If so, are they helpful?		
Is the page signed by the author?		X
Is the author's e-mail address included?	X	
Is there a date on the page that tells you when it was last updated?	X	
•If so, is it current?		X

Is the format standard and readable with your browser?	X	
Is there an image map (large clickable graphic with hyperlinks) on the page?		X
Are there advertisements on the page?	X	
• If so, are they distracting?		X
If you have graphics turned off, is there a text alternate to the images?	NA	NA
On supporting pages, is there a link back to the home page?	X	
Are the links clearly visible and annotated or explanatory?	X	
Are there photographs or sound files on the page?		X
• If so, can you be sure that a picture or sound has not been edited?	NA	NA
• If you're not sure, should you accept the information as valid for your purpose?	NA	NA

Summary of Part 1 Using the data you have collected above, write a short statement explaining why you would or wouldn't recommend this site to a fellow student for use in a project.

While everything seems to load quickly and some of the material is presented, I am more concerned by the quality of material and the advertisements on it. I feel that those will allow the authors, and curators of the site to leverage beliefs based on opinions rather than data. The credibility of the authors is also a great concern. When researching material I feel that it is imperative to have authors that are credible, educated, and research based. Without those things I am concerned about what may occur. For those reasons I would not recommend this website for non-biased research.

Part 2: Content	Yes	No
As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.		
Is the title of the page indicative of the content?	X	
Is the purpose of the page indicated on the home page?	X	
Can you tell when the document was created? (Some yes and some now)	X	X
If there is no date, does the information seem to be current? (Seems to be from last year and this year, but data is vague and does not state material)		X
Does up-to-date information matter for your purpose?	X	
Is the information on the page/site useful for your purpose?		X

Would it have been easier to get the information somewhere else?	X	
Would information somewhere else have been different? •Why or why not? (I feel the information would be presented more clearly and have a more research based focus)	X	
Did the information lead you to other sources, both print and Web, that were useful?		X
Is a bibliography of print sources included?		X
Does the information appear biased? (One-sided, critical of opposing views, etc.)	X	
Does the information contradict something you found somewhere else? (Depends on what I was looking for – good information or bad)	X	X
Do most of the pictures supplement the content of the page?		X

Part 3: Authority As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.	Yes	No
Who created the page?	Josh Sugarmann	
What organization is the person affiliated with?	None now	
Conduct a link: command in a search engine to see who links to this page. Can you tell if other experts in the field think this is a reputable page? (However I would not say that Huffington Post and Fox News are experts in the field)	X	
Does the domain of the page (k12, edu, com, org, gov) influence your evaluation?		X
Are you positive the information is valid and authoritative? •What can you do to validate the information? (I would have to do extensive leg work of researching references and sources that are very time consuming)		X
Are you satisfied the information is useful for your purpose? •If not, what can you do next? (Find another source)		X
If you do a search on the Web on the creator of the page, do you find additional information that shows the Web page author is an expert in the field?		X

Narrative Evaluation

Reviewing all of the data you have collected above while evaluating the site, explain why this

site is (or is not) valid for your purpose. Include the aspects of technical content, authenticity, authority, bias, and subject content.

When searching for information on media violence it is almost certain that one would find a website like this one. The title would make any unseasoned researcher think that they have come upon a site with valued and supported information, but that is not the case. While the information may seem current, as the website is listed as being updated in 2016, it does not provide valuable research based material that one should be looking for. Authors can often not be found, and the positions are based almost solely on opinion. It is also important to recognize that the ones that run the website do not list their credentials except in stating the jobs they have held. There is no way to truly determine their credibility. Statistics maybe be added into a piece, but that is only to focus on their point all the while ignoring the other side of the opinion. Websites like this one are deemed not to be credible for research.

Website Checklist Evaluation

The website checklist that was utilized in the above section included a lot of valuable information that allows the user a variety of functional and objective tools that allow them to assess the validity and credibility of websites. It addressed a wide range of things that I deem integral to the assessment process and encompassed a wide variety of items to be assessed.

There really is not anything else I feel was omitted from the checklist. It is extremely thorough in a wide variety of aspects. I felt all criteria was easy to evaluate and allowed the researcher an objective overview on the website in question. While some of the checklist was a little more time consuming than others, I feel it was time well spent. If a researcher can utilize a simple checklist quickly and efficiently it should save them time in the long run. The sources that they are able to evaluate should also give them a larger framework of success on future projects as well.

Part 4 Reflecting on Evaluation Strategies

Student's Perspective

When looking at the comparison of a website checklist and an annotated bibliography from the perspective of a student I feel that that it really is not a competition at all. As a student,

I would greatly prefer using a website checklist to evaluate a source. While an annotated bibliography “provides a brief account of the available research on a given topic” (King, 2010, p. 34) it also takes a considerable amount of time. I must admit that as a student I want the best information that I possibly can find as quickly as I possible can find it. The checklist allows the student to just go through the list and make sure their source checks off all the appropriate boxes. While this might be a quicker tool to use it does offer a large drawback. That drawback is that the checklist is quite often surface level check while an annotated bibliography would have the researcher going much deeper into the source and the material that they are researching. A checklist is a valuable tool when introducing online/website research to students. They will be able to grasp a quick understanding at what they need to be looking for, and hopefully gaining the knowledge to really go deeper in their research as they progress through their education.

Teacher's Perspective

When stepping back into a teacher's role I must admit that a quandary has developed. On one hand I would side with the student for the quickness of a website checklist, but I also see the benefit of really diving into the research that an annotated bibliography yields. I understand that utilizing websites requires much more deliberate action by students in today's world. It is imperative that they recognize that “information sources typically require information literacy skills in order to best facilitate searching, locating, accessing, and using the information” (Shipman, 2014, p. 62) that they intend to use. So, I must say that while personally appreciate the speediness of a website checklist I feel it is imperative that, as an educator, that I know how to utilize a checklist while staying focused on a more specific and focused annotated bibliography. Even though a checklist is easier to use the resourcefulness and thoroughness of

annotated bibliographies cannot be ignored. They make the researcher really go through what the website presents rather than just ticking a few boxes. The educator in me would start students with a website checklist and after much teaching and learning progress onto the annotated bibliography. I feel that this would give them the firm ground to stand on when researching information. It is also important to recognize that “[f]or contemporary students born into this digital generation, the Internet has become a vital channel for retrieving and exchanging information” (Cheng, Liang, & Tsai, 2013, p. 469) and that teachers need to play an integral role in their development as information researchers. When viewing myself as a “technology leader,” I feel that it is imperative that I share the beliefs of Cheng, Liang, & Tsai (2013), and develop a sophisticated belief about Internet-based knowledge and be able to evaluate it at a level that will help students in seeking academic help when needed. If we, as educators, can develop a well developed skill set and methodology when searching the Internet for material we can undoubtedly pass that on to our students. This has the powerful ability in allowing all students that we come contact with to further develop, and increase, their information literacy. If the students of today grasp ways to become more information literate than it is highly likely that they will grow into the future citizens that we see in them. They can, and will, be powerful, sophisticated, and critical researchers of information.

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