

Web Searching and Evaluation

- **Assignment Overview:** Have the students choose a topic to examine in a basic Web search using a search engine such as Google and in a library database (such as Proquest Research Library) for information resources on the topic. The student will need to find 3 sources from the web search and 3 sources from the library database search to compare and contrast.

The student will prepare a brief (2-3 paragraphs) description of each source they found through the two search tools, making sure to cite the source in the appropriate format. Then the student will write a 2 page analysis of the similarities and differences between the types of information found on the search engine and in the library databases.

Have the students consider the following questions when critically evaluating the Web sites:

- Who created the web site? What are their qualifications and credentials? Does the site have a profit motive? Does a profit motive impact the content?
- What's the purpose of the site? What types of information are available on this site? What does a user need to know to successfully find the information within the site?
- Is the information presented from a biased point of view? What type of language does the site use (scholarly, informal, inflammatory, etc.)? How current is the information?
- What are the strengths of the site? What are its weaknesses?
- Would you choose to use information from this site in **your** research paper? Why or why not?

Alternate Task: In-Class Small Student Group Assignment

Have students break into small groups (3-5 students) and locate/evaluate web resources as a group. Assign each group to a different web site which can be chosen based on the subject matter of the course. This could be done as part of a librarian lead instruction session in the library computer lab.

Directions to the students: Spend 15 minutes exploring your assigned website with your small student group in order to gather information and describe the site to the rest of your classmates. At the end of the 15 minutes, you and your partners will report your findings in a brief (5 minute) presentation to the class.

Remember to consider the essential questions above to help with your critical evaluation process.

- Purpose and Learning Outcomes:
 1. Explains to students the difference between the types of information that can be found in a library database compared to a Google search.
 2. Encourages students to develop skills for critically evaluating the quality of web resources.
 3. Provides an introduction into using the Eckerd College Library's databases to search for articles.

- ACRL Information Literacy Standards incorporated in this assignment:
 - Standard 1 – The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed
 - Standard 2 – The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.