

SEPARATING MYTH FROM REALITY ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB: HOW TO HELP STUDENTS CHOOSE AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

TUTORIAL PRESENTATION

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Today scholars are required to be information literate professionals. Identifying and selecting valid World Wide Web resources is an essential research skill because of "the saturation of our daily lives with information organized and transmitted via information technology" (Shapiro and Hughes, 1996). This skill becomes even more important when one considers that "[t]he town lunatic who used to sit on his porch muttering racial, ethnic, or sexual slurs was only heard by a few and was ignored or tolerated. Had he written a book, or even a letter to the local newspaper, his words never would have seen type. Now, if he has a computer and a modem, he can publish to the world" (Branscomb, 1998, p.12). The widespread use of the Internet has mobilized instructors in all disciplines as they find it necessary to teach students how to sift, sort and select appropriate resources rather than surf the World Wide Web choosing any page that appears to provide factual information.

Participants in this tutorial will use several World Wide Web documents created to demonstrate evaluation of the validity and/or scholarship of Internet information. Highlighted teaching documents include examples of both reliable and unreliable sites, as well as rubrics to help students choose documents with substantive content. Exploration of Internet evaluative documents from a variety of universities and colleges forms a final component of the tutorial.

Criteria that are determinants of authoritative and/or scholarly research sources will be examined and applied to actual World Wide Web documents. The teaching of these criteria in a general education computer literacy course, a humanities class, a computer science Internet research module and a management information systems course will be described. Data including student reactions to the delivery of the information literacy instruction and the value of the skills taught document the effectiveness of this educational paradigm.

The assets and liabilities of several evaluative instruments for World Wide Web resources will be discussed. Sample copies and online addresses for these pages will be provided.

Finally, participants will engage in the evaluation of several credible and “incredible” resources. Special emphasis will be placed on ways in which participating faculty can develop information literacy instructional modules for their respective teaching settings.

REFERENCES:

Branscomb, H. E. (1998). Casting your net: a student's guide to research on the Internet. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Shapiro, J.J., & Hughes, S.K. (1996, March/April). Information literacy as a liberal art. *Educom Review* [Online] 31(2) (6pp.). Available: <http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/review/reviewArticles/31231.html> [1998, November 5].