

Saint Joseph's College
Wellehan Library
Website Evaluation Criteria

One legitimate concern that your professors have regarding websites being used for academic research is that the sites selected for use have not been properly evaluated. If you are given permission to use websites as resources in papers you are asked to write, make sure you can justify their value by evaluating them using the following criteria.

One of the best tools you bring to web resource evaluation is your growing professional knowledge in the field of nursing. Do not be afraid to rely on that knowledge when rejecting resources that seem to “pass” a criteria-based evaluation.

Authority

- **Are you able to identify the author? Can you verify the author is an expert in the field being researched?**
- **If an author is not cited, is the site sponsored by a well known and well regarded organization or agency?**
- **Is the site found in a reliable domain (.edu, .gov, .org)?**
- **Can you find any trustworthy reviews of the site?**

Accuracy

- **Is the writing sound? Do you see typing, spelling or grammatical errors?**
- **Is there a list of references? Do the sources in the reference list seem scholarly? Is an original source for the information cited?**
- **Can you verify the information in another reliable source?**
- **If disclaimers are present, what is the nature of their warning?**

Objectivity

- **Is there any reason to suspect bias?**
- **Are links to other sites provided? If so, do they indicate potential bias?**

Currency

- **When was the site created?**
- **When was the site last updated?**
- **If links are provided on the page, do they point to live, updated sites?**

Purpose

- **For whom is the site intended?**
- **What is the main objective of the site?**

A Little More About Websites

It would be a really good idea for you to begin creating your own file of reliable web sites that you have evaluated. Once you have this list of “favorites,” you can turn to the web with more certainty when looking for information.

A great evaluation tool for you to use is the Scout Report Archives. It can be found at <http://scout.wisc.edu/Archives>. Use this site to locate website reviews.

Great websites do exist. Here are a few recommendations:

- <http://emedicine.medscape.com/> (eMedicine).
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/> (U.S. National Library of Medicine)
- <http://www.patientlinx.com/> (HealthyLinx)
- <http://www.webmd.com/> (WebMD)
- http://www.joannabriggs.edu.au/pubs/best_practice.php (Joanna Briggs Institute Best Practice Series)
- <http://www.aacn.org/WD/Practice/Content/practicealerts.pcms?menu=Practice> (American Association of Critical-Care Nurses) Valuable information is available in the Practice Alerts section.
- <http://www.tripdatabase.com/index.html> (TRIP Database for Evidence Based Medicine)
The TRIP Database began in 1997 as a result of the work of the founders in answering clinical questions, using the principles of **evidence-based** medicine. Not all content is available in full text.
- <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/epcix.htm> (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality)
The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the lead Federal agency charged with improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. As one of 12 agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, AHRQ supports health services research that will improve the quality of health care and promote **evidence-based** decision making.
- <http://www.guideline.gov/> (National Guideline Clearinghouse)
The National Guideline Clearinghouse™ (NGC) is a comprehensive database of **evidence-based clinical practice guidelines** and related documents. NGC is an initiative of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
The NGC mission is to provide physicians, nurses, and other health professionals, health care providers, health plans, integrated delivery systems, purchasers and others an accessible mechanism for obtaining objective, detailed information on clinical practice guidelines and to further their dissemination, implementation and use.

Databases

As a current SJC student, you have access to the most authoritative resources available through our on-line databases. These are not website resources; rather, the material found in the databases often comes from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals, which you would never find on the web.

The SJC databases that include evidence-based practice are *CINAHL*, “Cochrane databases,” and *MEDLINE*.

When you are no longer a student here, you will have to rely on electronic resources provided by your employer. If you are employed in the state of Maine, you will have access to the MARVEL databases (www.maine.gov/marvel). Many of those are used here at SJC, so they will look familiar to you. However, there are many vendors that produce databases and other information resources. You will not have access to any databases through the links below; they are provided here so that you can see the titles that you might encounter through your work or as you continue your education.

- http://marian.sandiego.edu/cl_dbnursing.html
- <http://rdl.lib.uconn.edu/subjects/1950;all>
- <http://aut.ac.nz.libguides.com/content.php?pid=25615&sid=184685>