

# Online Research

## Online Information:

Much information is available online and more is added each day. It is important to know how best to use the internet to collect information for research projects. 80% of undergraduate students say they use search engines such as Google™ or Google Scholar™ as their primary search method (note: Google Scholar™ tends to give access to higher quality information), yet only 1-10% of those students report searching databases for resources. Research shows that to access all available information, you must search databases utilizing resources such as EBSCOHost™ or JSTOR™ in addition to search engines.<sup>1</sup> If you're having difficulty getting started and determining how to conduct online research, a collection of resources is available from UNCW's Randall Library to assist with this process.

## Resources:

Randall Library pays for access to most databases and provides research guides for most subjects. These research guides are very useful for determining which databases to use. If you are having difficulties researching or using the library's resources, contact a librarian via the library homepage.

## Proper Citations:

It is important to acknowledge others' information as you use it, so you must properly reference your work to avoid plagiarism, a serious academic offense. If you're still unsure about your citation method, then you can have a free consultation with a writing tutor at the University Learning Center.

## Credibility of Online Sources:

The following fourteen points outline criteria for evaluating online resources. This information comes from Randall Library's "Evaluating Web Resources" page. [http://library.uncw.edu/guides/evaluating\\_web\\_resources](http://library.uncw.edu/guides/evaluating_web_resources)

### **Authority**

1. Author/Organization is identifiable, i.e., biographical information about the author or institutional affiliation and addresses are offered.
2. Sponsor/location of the site (identified by the URL or web address) is appropriate to the website's material. For example, .edu for educational research material.
3. Mail-to link is offered for submission of questions or comments.

### **Scope**

4. Document includes a list of additional print and electronic sources.
5. Links included appear relevant and appropriate to the site.

### **Currency**

6. Document includes a publication date or "last updated" date that is current.
7. All links to remote sites work.

### **Purpose**

8. Intended audience is easily identifiable.
9. Intent of information (to inform, teach, sell, persuade, entertain or enlighten) is clearly stated or implied.

### **Accuracy**

10. Document includes a bibliography.
11. Author provides both sides of the argument with no evidence of bias.

### **Usability**

12. Site is laid out clearly and logically and is easy to navigate.
13. Graphics and art serve a function.
14. Writing style is appropriate for the intended audience and follows basic rules of grammar and spelling.

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<sup>1</sup> Shanahan, Madeleine C. "Transforming Information Search and Evaluation Practices Of Undergraduate Students." *International Journal of Medical Informatics* 77 (2008): 518-526.