

Freshman Seminar PBL Exercise  
The Web of Deceit (or “Can you really trust the Internet?”)  
Lesson Plan

*Goals*

The goal of this PBL activity was to introduce students to the importance of evaluating information. This activity builds on the previous PBLs concerned with determining keywords, search terms and searching online databases.

By the end of this PBL activity, students will be able to apply criteria to evaluate the authority of a Website, article or other information.

*Objectives*

At the conclusion of this PBL, students will be able to apply the following criteria in evaluating Web sites and information:

Coverage  
Currency  
Accuracy  
Authority  
Objectivity

Students will demonstrate that objectives are met by successfully discussing issues pertaining to Coverage, Currency, Accuracy, Authority, and Objectivity when evaluating a Web site, article or other information.

*Prerequisites*

Students will complete the Posters and Keywords, and databases PBLs before this PBL.

*Materials*

This activity is best conducted in a computer lab with Internet access. Each student requires a 5X7 index card to provide reflections about the exercise. The Internet and Scholarly Source Checklist was also distributed.

Instructions for the activity are distributed to students. The instructions indicate the URL for the Website to be evaluated. The instructions read:

1. Go to the Website listed below. Using the checklist, evaluate the Website.
2. Work with your team and on the attached sheet; take notes about your observations.
3. After you've completed evaluating your Website, search the Web and find a reputable example of a Website on the same topic.
4. On the attached sheet, note your reasons (based on the checklist) why you feel the site you selected is reputable.
5. Print the first page of your Website and leave it on your desk for me to collect.
6. Select a representative from your group to demonstrate what you found. Show us the alternative example you found on the Web.

### *Lesson Description*

This allows students to evaluate information by critiquing deceptive Web sites that appear real or promote mis-information and propaganda. Some of the Web sites are comical in nature such as a hospital site featuring a pregnant male. Others but are serious in nature such as a site created by a hate group.

This PBL focuses on ACRL Standards Three and Five and the Evaluation level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

### *Lesson Procedure*

The class will be introduced to the importance of evaluating information. The Internet & Scholarly Source Checklist are reviewed along with key points for evaluating information: Coverage, Currency, Accuracy, Authority and Objectivity

PBL Activity: Students work in their PBL groups. The groups are given one of several Web sites: Godsend Institute ([www.godsendinstitute.org/home.html](http://www.godsendinstitute.org/home.html)), RYT Hospital ([www.rythospital.com/](http://www.rythospital.com/)) or MartinLutherKing.org ([www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org)). Each team is instructed to review the checklist criteria and determine whether or not this Web site meets the criteria for the checklist. Students are asked to find examples of problems bases on the criteria and present the findings to the class. Then, each team will search the Web and find good examples of Web sites on the team topics and apply the criteria to those examples. Each team will select a spokesperson who will share results with the class.

While performing the PBL exercise, students were required to write their reflections of the activity on the 3X7 cards. Reflection questions were:

What are some examples of how you might use what you learned today in other areas of your life?

How did working in teams impact the way you learned about evaluating Web sites?

### *Assessment/Evaluation*

Students are assessed by how well they applied the evaluation criteria and by the problems identified in the Web sites. Reflection questions can also provide indirect assessment of learning. Team interaction can also be observed to ascertain if the students are collaborating.

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# Internet & Scholarly Source Checklist

*Adapted with Permission of Debra Gilchrist, Pierce College Library, Lakewood & Puyallup, Washington*

**Pearson Library**

Criteria	Questions to Ask About Print and Internet Sources
<b>Coverage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> What topics are included in this work?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are the included topics explored in depth?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Was this information created for the Web or was it originally something else transported to the Web?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the site tell you more than you could find in an encyclopedia?</li></ul>
<b>Currency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> How old is the information?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is it too old to be considered useful?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the publication date clearly labeled?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Has the site been updated recently?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Do all the external links work?</li></ul>
<b>Accuracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> How reliable and free from error is the information?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there misspelled words or examples of poor grammar?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there editors and fact checkers?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> What research methodologies were used?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Do the conclusions in the article seem to be justified?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> What is the purpose of the Web site? (See Objectivity)</li></ul>
<b>Authority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Who is(are) the author(s)?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> What are the author's qualifications for writing on this subject? Are their credentials posted and verifiable?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is it a name that keeps popping up in your literature searches?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the author the one who conducted the research (primary source) or is he/she summarizing the work done by someone else (secondary source)?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> If it is a secondary source, does the author include a bibliography of sources consulted?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the source on a college, university, community college, high school, middle school, or an elementary school Website?</li></ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> From what country does the Web site originate?
<b>Objectivity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> What idea(s) is (are) the author(s) trying to promote? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the information presented with a minimum of bias or does the author show a clear bias for one idea or another? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it likely that this bias affected the research results? <input type="checkbox"/> To what extent is the information trying to sway the opinion of the audience? <input type="checkbox"/> What is the main purpose of the site? Inform? Sell? Persuade? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there advertising? Do the ads influence the information presented?
<b>Web Specific</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Do they send you beyond their site to other reliable sources of information? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the links to other sites evaluated, ranked or annotated in any way? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the site offer anything unique? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the graphics on the page clear and helpful? <input type="checkbox"/> Do the graphics add to understanding or are they window dressing?

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