A Guide to Evaluating Internet Resources
Locating & Evaluating Internet Resources for American Politics Public Policy Paper

Evaluation Criteria for Internet Resources:
The following questions will assist you in judging web sites.

Questions to ask yourself

| Authority | • Is the author and the author’s affiliation clearly indicated?  
|          | • Is there contact information for the author?  
|          | • Is the publisher (or publishing source) reputable? |

| Accuracy | • Do editors check the information?  
|          | • Is appropriate documentation provided when the author refers to another’s work?  
|          | • Is the page error-free? |

| Objectivity | • Is the purpose of the site clearly stated?  
|             | • Does the author make use of emotional appeals instead of logical arguments as a means to sway the opinion of the audience?  
|             | • Is sponsorship acknowledged? |

| Currency | • Is the publication date (date created) clearly stated?  
|          | • Is the page revised regularly, with the date posted?  
|          | • Are all links active? |

| Coverage | • What is the purpose of the page? Is the scope clearly stated?  
|          | • To what depth does this page purport to delve into the topic? Does it claim to be what it is not?  
|          | • Who is the audience for the page? Experts or novices? |

Quick Guide to Domain Definitions
Evaluating the domain name in the address of an Internet site can help you determine its source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.com</td>
<td>commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.edu</td>
<td>educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.gov</td>
<td>governmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.mil</td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.org</td>
<td>organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.net</td>
<td>network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country Abbreviations
Example: .nz=New Zealand

/~/ Although this is not a domain name, it is an indication of an account under a domain name. For example, web pages of students at educational institutions are indicated by the school’s address followed by a tilde and the student’s name.
Annotated Guide to Useful Internet Sites for the Public Policy Paper

- **THOMAS** [http://thomas.loc.gov/](http://thomas.loc.gov/)
  This site provides up-to-date legislative information on the internet. It includes three general categories: Legislation, the Congressional Record, and Committee Information. The FAQ section makes this potentially intimidating site quite navigable. *This is the site for accessing Congressional documents.*

- **GOVBOT** [http://ciir2.cs.umass.edu/Govbot/](http://ciir2.cs.umass.edu/Govbot/)
  Developed by the CIIR (The Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval), this site allows you to search U.S. Government and military web sites without searching the whole Internet. Perusing the “Query Help” page will assist users in constructing relevant and fruitful queries.

  Web sites similar to GOVBOT, that allow you to search for U.S. Government information without searching the whole Internet, include [FedWorld](http://www.fedworld.gov/gpo.htm) and [USGovSearch](http://usgovsearch.northernlight.com/publibaccess/).

- **Federal Web Locator** [http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/](http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/)
  The Federal Web Locator is a service provided by the Center for Information Law and Policy and is intended to be the one-stop shopping point for Federal Government information on the World Wide Web. It is intended to be a comprehensive source to Federal Government information, but it seems to be strongest in agency and sub-agency information, arranged hierarchically. It also lists all known Federal Government Web servers.

- **FindLaw** [http://www.findlaw.org/](http://www.findlaw.org/)
  This is the site for searching law-related Web sites without searching the entire Internet. With a subject directory resembling Yahoo!, FindLaw is a guide that helps users browse more than 25,000 legal sites, search for case law (including U.S. Supreme Court decisions back to 1893), and legal news.

- **FedStats** [http://www.fedstats.gov](http://www.fedstats.gov)
  FedStats links to statistical tables from over 70 U.S. Federal Government agencies. It includes an “A to Z” index that provides direct access to detailed data listings in 275 categories. Keyword search capability enables users to search Web sites linked to FedStats. The site also includes an on-line version of the most frequently requested tables from the Statistical Abstract of the United States. The Regional Statistics component offers data that is broken down into geographic areas – frequently at state or county levels.

- **Statistical Resources on the Web** [http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/stats.html](http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/stats.html)
  This is an index to statistical web sites and individual statistical publications arranged by subject category from the University of Michigan Documents Center. Examples of statistical information covered include demographic, economic, education, political, and sociological from a wide variety of sources. It is particularly useful for comparative and international data.

  For additional politics-related web sites see the Politics Department’s “Internet Resources for Government, Politics & Law” site at [http://cornell-iowa.edu/politics/net_pol_law.html](http://cornell-iowa.edu/politics/net_pol_law.html).