Evaluating the World Wide Web

RWJ Library of the Health Sciences
August 7, 2001
There are currently over 2.1 billion unique publicly available pages on the Internet.

The Internet is growing at an explosive rate of more than 7 million pages each day.

A recent Harris poll found that 60 million American adults have used the WWW to find health information.

One U.S. survey showed that nearly half of adult Internet users have recently accessed health and medical web sites.

Another study reports that 40% of the traffic on the Internet is a result of the search for medical information.

Huntley AC. *The need to know: patients, e-mail, and the Internet [editorial]*. Archives of Dermatology. 135(2): 198-9, 1999 Feb.
Top Level Domain Names

- .com
- .net
- .org
- .edu
- .mil
- .gov
- country codes
Questions to ask about a Web site

Evaluating Web Resources.
Jan Alexander and Marsha Ann Tate.
Widener University.
Authority

★ Is it clear who is responsible for the contents?
★ Is there a way of verifying the author and sponsor?
★ What are the qualifications of the author?
Accuracy

- Can sources of factual information be verified in another source?
- Is the information free of typographical and editorial errors?
- Is it clear who has the ultimate responsibility for content creation?
Currency

- When was the page first written?
- When was the page first placed on the Web?
- When was the page last revised?
Coverage

- Is there an indication that the page has been completed or is still under construction?
- If there is a print equivalent, do you know if the Web version is complete or not?
Objectivity

- Is the information provided as a public service?
- Is the information free of advertising?
- If there is advertising, is it clearly differentiated from content?
Some more questions to ask about a Web site

Evaluation Criteria.
Nancy Calabretta and Susan Cavanaugh.
The Cooper Health System.
Audience

- Who is the intended audience - the consumer or the health-care professional?
- Are the links at the same level?
Ease of Access

- Must one register to use the site?
- Is it easy to navigate within the site?
- Is there a good search interface or a well-organized index?
- Is there more than one way to get the information you want?
Design

- Does the design enhance the information or access to the information?
- Do useless graphics take an unreasonably long time to load?
- Do you have to download extra software to access the information?
Comparability

욱 Is the site unique?
욱 How does it compare to other similar sites?
욱 Does it have any distinctive features?
An Internet Legend:
Whales in the Minnesota River?

Tina Kelley.