



## ORANGE COAST COLLEGE LIBRARY

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### Searching on the Internet

#### Searching

Popular Web browsers, such as *Firefox* and *Microsoft Explorer*, allow you to contact Web sites. By using a browser, one can conveniently search the Web two ways.

The first way to search the Web is to click in the address box or location bar, type in a URL (uniform resource locator), and hit return. This will enable you to locate that unique Web site. The URL for the **Orange Coast College Library** is:

<http://www.orangecoastcollege.edu/academics/library>

The second way to search on the Internet is to use a subject directory or search engine. **Subject directories** provide links to Web sites by subjects. They allow you to search and browse through a hierarchy of information divided into categories and sub-categories and provide quality listings of the sites that cover your particular topic. The most popular subject directory is *Yahoo* (<http://www.yahoo.com>), but another good one is *Librarians' Index to the Internet* (<http://lii.org>).

Using a **search engine** is easy; however, the results may not always be exact. Unlike the subject directories, a search engine searches by keyword. A list of all the Web pages relating to your topic will appear with the most relevant at the top of your results list. If you need information on the subject "teenage smoking," you would type this topic in the dialog bar, hit return, and a number of Web pages would appear for your selection. The most popular search engine is *Google* (<http://google.com>)

The following **search strategies** should be kept in mind when using a subject directory or search engine:

1. Learn one or two subject directories or search engines well. Know what their capabilities are and why you would go to one instead of another for a particular topic.
2. Since word order matters, enter the most important concept first. Make your search specific.
3. For a more precise search, enclose phrases in quotation marks.
4. Make sure you enter proper nouns with capital letters.
5. Keep in mind that you can use the help function or advance search function if available.
6. Lastly, be flexible, refine your search, try new tactics, think critically and have fun!

To learn more about **search strategies** for selected search directories and search engines, look at the following Web sites:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Strategies.html>  
<http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/open/les4/guide.html>

## Evaluating

Anyone can put anything on the Internet. Therefore, some sites are not reliable or valuable for research papers and projects. For this reason, it is important that you carefully evaluate a Web site. The following are some basic evaluation criteria to consider:

1. *Authority* – Who is responsible for putting this Web site together? Does the author have the training, education, background or experience to write with authority on this topic?
2. *Source* – Check to see if the sponsor/location of the site is appropriate to the material as shown in the URL. Examples: .edu for education or research materials, .gov for government resources, .com for commercial products or commercially-sponsored sites, and .org for organization (i.e. <http://www.learnthenet.com>). Also ~Name in a URL may mean a personal home page.
3. *Currency* – When was the Web site last revised and when was it written? Do all the links work and is the site well maintained?
4. *Coverage/Relevancy* – What is this site all about? Does this site provide the information you are looking for and is there anything missing from this site that another site might cover?
5. *Accuracy* – How is the information presented on the Web site? Is there evidence and documentation to support the author's claims or arguments?
6. *Objectivity/Point of View* – Why is this information on the Web? Does the site show bias, sway opinion, or advertise?

The following Web sites will be helpful to consult for **evaluation techniques**:

<http://gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/open/les1/guide.html>  
<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/~agsmith/evaln/evaln.htm>  
<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/critical/index.htm>

## Citing

When writing a research paper, it is important that you acknowledge in your works cited or bibliography where you obtained the information. The standard citation elements for a Web site are the following:

Author's name (last name, first name). "Title of Document." Information about print publication. Information about electronic publication. Access information (access date and URL).

Example:

Zeki, Semir. "Artistic Creativity and the Brain." Science 6 July 2001: 51 – 52. Science Magazine. 2002. Amer. Assn. For the Advancement of Science. 24 Sept. 2002 <<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/293/5527/51>>.

If your class is using the MLA style to cite, the official Web site for guidance is <http://www.mla.org>. Try <http://www.apa.org> if your class is using the APA (American Psychological Association) style.