Important Reminder When Using Websites for Course Work

Using the web for research is a given. And why not; it is fast, easy and plentiful, but before using Internet sources for your assignments you need to find out if your professor allows use of internet sources for the assignment. Additionally, you need to ask yourself, what am I really looking for?

- original scientific research?
- reference facts like dates?
- information on a current event?
- information on a not-so-current event?
- a critique or evaluation of an important work?

When you use free search engines like Yahoo! or Google, you are getting information that has been provided by anyone with a computer. It is a self-publishing medium. In short, there is no evaluation process, so that work must be done by you.

Have You Tried Google Scholar?

Google Scholar allows you to search for scholarly research on the Internet. Check it out at http://scholar.google.com/.

To get the most out of the tool and link to Stony Brook's subscription resources, be sure to select Stony Brook University —SUNY—Fulltext @Stony Brook for Library Links under Scholar Preferences.

Some things to think about when evaluating websites:

- Purpose—What is the site about: an article from an online journal or newspaper, a government publication, a sales pitch or someone's personal webpage?
- Authorship—Who is the author and what is his/her expertise on the subject? Does the author have an agenda? Who sponsors the site?
- Content—Is the information accurate? Is it current? Is there evidence of bias or point-of-view?
- Design—Is the site logically and clearly displayed? Are there typos or misspellings, or other evidence that the site was not created by a professional?

For more information on how to evaluate websites please see the library's Evaluating Internet Resources guide.

Tip! If you are not sure about a web resource, ask your instructor or a librarian for help.

The SBU Library Research Guide

An interactive tutorial designed to help you work on research assignments is available online at http://www.library.stonybrook.edu/tutorial/index.html.

The SBU Library Research Guide covers:

- choosing a topic
- identifying sources
- using STARS (University Libraries Catalog)
- finding articles
- using the web
- and citing sources

How Do I Cite This?

When preparing assignments at the University, you will be required to cite the resources you've used to back up your arguments so that:

- Instructors can find the resources you used.
- You can properly credit other people whose ideas you use.
- You do not plagiarize another author.

If you are confused about how or when to cite a resource, speak to a librarian for assistance. Librarians can provide style guide manuals or point you to quality websites that provide citation information. Librarians can also help you learn to use tools, like EndNote or Zotero, that can help you cite your resources correctly. (Check for workshops on citations on our website.)