Conducting Research on the Web

# Alternative Search Engines

Although Google has become the most used search engine, it is not necessary the best when searching for good research on the web. Since each search engine has its own search algorithm and ranking process results using the same key words can differ between search engines. Using a metasearch engine will combine results from common search engines. There are specialty and subject specific search engines as well as metasearch engines that may provide better results for your research needs. Subject directories are often maintained by professional librarians or other groups of individuals, and who select resources to information that is appropriate for scholarly research (Vidmar). There are a number of great [specialty search engines](http://bestonlineuniversities.com/2011/20-useful-specialty-search-engines-for-college-students/) to use in lieu of Google. In addition, Google Scholar, a subset of the Google search engine, limits search results to scholarly literature such as papers, theses, books, and reports (University Libraries, University of Alabama).

Alternative search engines to consider instead of using Google include:

# Evaluating Websites

When you’re using the Internet for research, you shouldn’t assume that everything you find is accurate and appropriate to use. Some websites are more commercial in nature, and therefore may present a biased opinion while other websites are outdated and may not reflect the most current information on the topic. Since anyone can publish information on the web, you cannot assume the information you find is accurate or written by an authority on the topic. The following is a list of items to consider when evaluating whether a website is appropriate to use in your research. (Kapoun)

* Authority: Can you determine who wrote the article, or what company/institution is sponsoring the website? Is the publisher reputable? Is there a way to contact the company or author for more information, if needed?
* Bias or Objectivity: What are the goals of the article or website? Is the intended purpose to advertise or promote? Does the author express opinions that may reflect only one side of a situation?
* Relevance: Is the information on the site current? Can you find a date indicating when the article was written? Is the date current? Are there links on the webpage that are no longer active?
* Audience: Is the website intended for your research needs? Is the information too casual, elementary, or promotional?
* Coverage: Do the links on the site complement the document topic? Does the site feature mostly images or all text? Is there a fee to obtain all the information?

# Bibliography

Kapoun, Jim. *Five criteria for evaluatin web pages*. 10 May 2010. <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webcrit.html>.

University Libraries, University of Alabama. *Access to Google Scholar*. n.d. <www.lib.ua.edu/googlescholar>.

Vidmar, Dale. *Internet Search Tools*. 8 July 2014. <http://hanlib.sou.edu/searchtools/subjdir.html>.