There are problems and benefits to using information from web sites. Having a clear understanding of your topic will allow you to decide when it is most appropriate to use this type of information in your research.

**When to Use Web Sites**

- You have explored available print sources and still need more information. Information from your print sources can help you establish an idea of what information is accurate and trustworthy before you need to evaluate Internet sources.
- Your topic requires information of the utmost currency.
- You know of a good resource that does not publish a periodical that is
available in the library. For example, Planned Parenthood is an excellent resource for information on women's health and global reproduction issues, but they do not publish a magazine or academic journal. The Planned Parenthood Web site offers valuable links to press releases, fact sheets, articles, etc.

- You want to explore an idea and see "what's out there." General browsing to assess the quantity and quality of information on a topic is fastest on the Internet where you may encounter a wide variety of sources in a single search.

Some Disadvantages of Web Sites

- Unlike other sources, such as refereed journals, there is no quality control on the Internet. Information can be totally inaccurate, out-of-date, and/or manipulated and misleading. Sources and information from Web sites must be verified, which takes additional time and effort.

- The Web is extremely vast and there is no single search engine or tool that gives you access to all the information available; therefore, in order to really find most of the information on a given subject, you have to use multiple search engines and/or directories.

- As an information resource, Web sites can be extremely unstable. Links go dead and web pages disappear. There is no archive to look up information that was on the Internet at one time, so once the site has been changed or the server crashes or the link goes dead, the information you were once using can be gone forever. You cannot go back to it later, and you will be citing a source that no longer exists.

Some Advantages of Web Sites

- Web sites provide immediate information. Information can be shared instantly, unlike books, magazines, journals or even newspapers that have some publishing lag time.

- Many Web sites are open to everyone, so ideas, theories, or news stories that might be overlooked by other media as being too controversial can be found here.

- There are numerous organizations like community action groups that do not publish their own journals or magazines but are likely to have a web page.

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