Getting Started - Overview

-The internet has its benefits and disadvantages with regards to research. It's a matter of finding good sources.
-There are many kinds of internet sources. The major ones for our purposes include:

1. **Wikipedia**
   -A general starting point. You can click on their citations for more in-depth information

2. **The news**
   -Good at providing narrative for current events but lacks analysis. Good for background information.
   -Bear in mind the editorial bias that may influence the supposedly "objective" act of reporting the news.
   -For news on specific countries, visit local media sources. The BBC country profiles (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm) provides a list of media within a country.

3. **Magazines**
   -Publications that are very specialized. They can cover anything from fashion, culture to news. We look at mostly current affairs magazines.
   -Tend to offer more of an analytical perspective.
   -More of an editorial bias

4. **News Aggregators**
   -A form of new media that blends blogging and news.
   -Collects significant news articles for the day, making searching for the news easier

5. **Research reports**
   -These are scholarly research articles that are held up to academic research standards. There are public access ones and subscription service ones.
   -Public access ones are ones that anyone can access. Government agencies, think tanks and policy makers will often publish them online and viewing them is often free of charge (though you may have to sign up for them).
   -Subscription service ones are accessible through your school library or public library. Talk to your librarian for more information.

Filtering Information and Critical Researching

Typology of Sources
1. Primary – original sources, firsthand accounts, policies, etc.
2. Secondary – analysis of primary sources
3. Tertiary – compilation of primary and secondary sources

Print vs. Online Sources

Print sources on average are more reliable than online sources. Print sources are carefully scrutinized, carefully document their research, are more credible and often attempts to be balanced. While online sources could meet these criteria, they often do not.

One way to tell an online source's credibility is to look at the domain name. More reliable sources will have generic domain names (i.e. .ca, .gov, .org, etc.) over domain sites that are hosted by affiliate sites (i.e. contain wordpress, myspace, yahoo, rogers, etc.)

Evaluative criteria

There are three things to look for when critically evaluating sources.

1. Credibility – look at organizational profile, author's profile, the publisher and frequency of updates.
2. Content accuracy – Look for relevancy of sources used and its documentation. As a general rule, more sources will tend to be more reliable on average.
3. Objectivity – Look at logical progression of argument, whether the author addresses all sides and the tone of voice suggested by the words.

A Guide to Search Operators

Search operators tend to apply to search engines or a search bar. They are terms that can help narrow or broaden your search, allowing one to save time.

Some search operators include placing OR, AND, NOT, *, +, "", site:, in your searches. Refer to the slides for a more detailed explanation of how to use each search operator.

Some search engines are specialized and meant to search for one specific topic.

Filtering Information and Critically Evaluating Internet Resources

Introduction

- The internet is a vast resource with an abundance of useful information. It has allowed for easy access to information that was previously only available as print sources. However, due to the large amount of information available, it is necessary to discern between what is important and what is not.

Types of Resources Available

- Primary
  - Original Source, unedited or reinterpreted in any sort of way
  - Providing new information (not known before), Original thoughts
  - Recordings, speeches, interviews, surveys, patents
- Secondary
  - Interpretations of Primary resources. Not evidence themselves, but remarks, on evidence.
  - Textbooks, Encyclopedias, Magazines, Newspapers, etc.
- Tertiary
  - Combination of Primary and Secondary Sources

Online vs. Print Resources

Online	Print
• Accessible to anyone with a computer. May or may not have been extensively edited	• Multiple reviewing and editing process for publication • Critically reviewed by experts in their respective field.
• May or may not have the author published on the website. • Author could be any person with access to the internet (expert or novice)	• Clear author(s), editor(s), publisher(s). You know exactly who was involved in the book. • Author usually expert (or knows topic extremely well) in respective field
• May not be clear where information was obtained	• Clear where information was obtained. Usually professionally sourced
• Sites claiming to be factual may have bias.	• Bias exists in published documents but it is usually clearly stated.

Tips

- Looking at the URL
  - Personal pages are typically sites from yahoo, geocities, aol, rogers, etc.

    - Personal pages may also have the name of the person embedded into the link (i.e TSarmiento).
- Source of domain
    - Is the link from a government, non profit organization, educational, research facility/university, etc?
    - Typically have websites ending in: .gov, .edu, .org etc.
        - Can also look for websites ending in country codes (.ca, .us, .uk), but these are becoming less secure
        - Ultimately check out the sites that you think most suit what you are looking for.

Evaluative Criteria of All Websites

- Content Credibility
    - Organization
        - Does the website give an organizational description of
            - Missions Statement
            - Philosophy
            - Goals
            - What they do?
            - Advisory Board, Executives etc.
        - May have to truncate the URL back to where it shows its homepage to find this information
    - Author
        - What are the author's accomplishments to date?
        - Look at author's relevant work and educational experience
        - Author's current position
        - Reputation
            - Searching author's name in a search engine to find peer reviewed articles
    - Publishing Credibility
        - Is the publisher credible?
        - Publisher of the site is usually stated directly after http;//
            - Example: articles from newspapers/magazines should have the newspaper/magazine name in the URL
    - Quality Control
        - Is the website being consistently updated?
            - This is important especially for topics that are highly in debate or cutting edge technology
            - Publications are critically peer reviewed
            - You can check to see if organization has recently presented findings at major conferences or seminars.
    - Signs that a website lacks credibility
        - Lack of author, organization or quality control
        - Use of colloquial terms or slang
        - Poor grammar, sentence structure
- Content Accuracy
    - Content is up to date

        - More importantly, content is continuously is high value
        - Theories can be hundreds of years old, and be of high value
        - Issues like technology need to be continuously updated to ensure user is getting the latest information
    - Documentation of Reliable Sources
        - Websites with reliable and accurate information will usually provide you with the source of their information (documentation).
            - This may be found through footnotes, endnotes, bibliography or hyperlinks from their website
            - Looking at these will give you a general idea of where
            - Without documentation the statement is an opinion or a point of view.
                - Exception to lack of documentation would be journalism from large newspapers or media.
            - The more documentation, the more points of view and perspectives conveyed. This increases the chances of understanding the topic in its entirety.
- Objectivity
    - The author attempts to provide a fair, balanced, and logical insight on the situation
        - One way to evaluate this is to observe the tone of the information
            - Be critical of websites that continually use hate, slanderous, and an angry tone with over emotions. Writing in this way usually results in a very one sided argument.
            - Instead look for sources that presents a more calm and reasonable tone.

Websites to look at for more Information

- Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask – UC Berkeley Teaching and Internet Workshops
    - http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html
- Critical Evaluation of Sources on the Internet – University of Alberta
    - http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/criticalevaluation/
- Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sources – University of Maryland
    - http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/primary-sources.html#primary
- Evaluating Internet Sources – McGill University
    - http://www.mcgill.ca/library-findinfo/internet/evaluating/
- Evaluating Internet Research Sources – VirtualSalt
    - http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm

A Guide to Search Operators

Search operators are terms that are used to narrow or broaden a search. The operators allow one to save time and frustration while researching by specifying the search results.

Common search operators are the Boolean operators i.e. AND, OR, and NOT.

- **The OR operator**

Most of the time search engines consider all words in a search. To specifically allow *either* one of several words, you can use the OR operator (note: the OR operator must be always in CAPS). If I want to search for the **G8 Summit 2008 OR 2009**, I will get results for either one of these years. However, if I search **G8 Summit 2008 2009**, I will get results that shows pages that include both years in the same page. The symbol **|** can be substituted for OR.

- **The AND operator**

This operator is a default when searching; thus, it is not needed.

- **The NOT operator**

This operator allows you to exclude keywords that you don't want to appear in your search. For example, if I want to search for education and not technology, then I would type **education NOT technology.** The NOT operator must be in CAPs to work effectively.

- **Want to exclude terms, use – operator.**

This operator is somewhat similar to the NOT operator. Adding the minus sign i.e., - before a word tells the search engine that you don't want pages containing that word to appear in the results. For example, if I want to search for anti-virus, but exclude references to software, I will type **anti-virus –software**

- **Wildcard or fill in the blanks (***)

If you include * within a query, search engines treat the star as a placeholder for unknown term(s) and then find the best matches. In other words, it tells the search engine to use variations of that word. For example, if I am searching for a bill Obama voted on, the query **Obama voted * on the * bill** will give me stories about different votes on different bill. This operator must be used on full words, not part words.

- **Search exactly as is (+)**

Sometimes search engines help you search more than they needs to. For example, if I search childcare, I will also get results for child care. To avoid this add + operator before childcare, so it will be **+childcare** (avoid space between + and your search). This way, Google will match the precise word you have typed, which in this case is childcare.

- **Search within a specific website (site:)**

You can specify that that search results should of a given website. For example, if I want to search for Iraq in New York Times website, then I will type **Iraq site: nytimes.com**.

- **Phrase search ("")**

By putting double quotes around a set of words, you are telling Google to consider the exact words in that exact order without any change.

Know Your Search Engines

No matter which topic you are searching on, you are likely to use search engines often. However, the problem with search engines is that you either get too many or too little hits.

Q: What can help you avoid a lot of frustration and wasted time?
A: Spending some time learning what each search engine does and how best to use it.
There are several high quality peer-reviewed subject directories containing links selected by subject experts. Some good examples are BUBL Link/ 5:15, INFOMINE, InfoSurf and Academic Info. For instance, BUBL Link/ 5:15 provides a menu of subjects that allows you to search within a particular subject, saving a lot of time.

Search engines can be very diverse. Here are some examples.

- **General Search Engines**
  - Google
  - Ask.com
  - Yahoo! Search
- **Search by Subject**
  - BUBL Link/ 5:15
  - INFOMINE
  - InfoSurf
  - Academic Info

- **Questions & Answers**
  - Human answers: Yahoo! Answers
- **Maps**
  - Google Maps
  - MapQuest
- **News**
  - Google News
  - Yahoo! News

For a complete list of search engines, visit List of search engines.

Conclusion

Researching can be a difficult and frustrating process. The key to easing the process is following the right steps to find valuable sources without wasting too much time i.e., knowing about the types of sources available on the Internet, critically evaluating sources, and narrowing you searches.