



CyberAngels

A program of Guardian Angels
keeping it safe

Searching Online

There are many ways to find information on the Internet. One of the most popular ways to find information is through the use of "search engines." Search engines create their listings using different software programs. These programs often "crawl" the web like spiders, visiting the sites that have been submitted by website designers or owners, called webmasters. After visiting and reviewing each site, these programs "index" what they have found. People then search through what the engines have compiled by typing in words or phrases that they want to find. Search engines constantly have their "spiders" crawling the web, reading, and indexing websites. Google is an example of a search engine, and is one of the most popular today.

Is it good information?

Information assessment is a vital part of searching on the Internet. There are no set standards for Internet sources, anyone with access to a computer and the Internet can create web sites. Here are a few factors to consider when using online resources:

- **Purpose:** Why is the site online? Users of the Internet should always keep in mind why any site is there. The purpose of a site will always influence the information presented. If the author of the site wants to influence his/her readers to believe one particular idea, the site will reflect that persuasion. Motives may include commercial gain and entertainment, as well as providing information.
- **Content:** What is on the site? What is the information presented? Does the content of a site seem appropriate for the information? Users should be aware that web sites are a reflection of the author. Unlike printed text, web sites are usually created and maintained by one person.
- **Authorship:** Who designed and created the site? Does that individual have credentials pertaining to the information provided? Authorship is the biggest influence on information found online. A reliable source of information on the Internet will have the author's name and his/her credentials, if any, clearly marked at the site. This is not to say that sites with anonymous authors are never reliable. Caution is the keyword when using information found on sites that do not have a clearly named author.
- **Modifications:** How often is the site modified? When was the last modification? Site modification often indicates if the author of the site is keeping up with the subject that his/her site pertains to. Modifications, though, should be taken with a grain of salt. If there is more than text on the site, the modifications could be pertaining to design rather than information.