Social studies and the internet

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SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE INTERNET

by

Kristen Heider

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree of
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Approved by

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This study sought to address two primary questions: (1) to determine if students’ attitudes towards using the Internet as a resource changed as a result of their applying a web evaluation guide, and (2) to determine if the quality of students’ research products improved as a result of web evaluation lessons. The ninth grade, world history students’ familiarity and prior use of the Internet with research projects was assessed through a pre-survey as well as the review of their prior research papers and projects. Finally, taking into consideration progress and curriculum, research projects were assigned individually, allowing class time in the library to search for resources on the Internet and in print materials if applicable. The majority of the participants already possessed a firm understanding of the dangers and merits of the Internet. In general, whether it is from prior knowledge learned surfing the Internet at home or lesson plans designed and implemented by teachers in the classroom, students are ready to face the challenges of incorporating resources gleamed from the Internet into their educational experiences.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Review of the Relevant Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Study Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection Approach</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Research Site</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjects and Samples</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variables to be Studied</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Action Taken</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Findings and Discussion</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Findings: Pre- and Post-Surveys</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Computer Access</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Access at Home and Length of Access</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to the Internet at School</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Use: Frequency at Home and School</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should the Internet be Used in the Classroom</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usefulness and Frequency for Internet</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of the Internet by Students</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written Research Projects</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of References</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Useful Websites for Primary Source Material</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Website Addresses Used as Sources for Creating Web Evaluation Guide</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Third Marking Period Grading Rubric</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Pre-Survey</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Post-Survey</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Searching for Search Tools Lesson plan</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Searching the Internet Worksheet</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>How Can You Tell if That Website is Good?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Web Evaluation Guide</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Web Evaluation Lesson Plan</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Website Ranking Sheet</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Student Evaluation Rubric</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix M</td>
<td>Third Marking Period Research Project Requirements</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

For many students surfing the web is an acceptable manner in which to find research for a social studies term paper in the same way students gathered and copied information from encyclopedias a decade or two ago. Unfortunately, many individuals are not aware that the content they receive through search engines is generally not evaluated for reliability, credibility, or validity (Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Brandt, 1996). The print sources students of the past used for research projects and papers were reviewed, authenticated, and evaluated by authoritative sources such as the federal government, peers, experts, subject specialists, or librarians. When using the Internet, the evaluation is often left to the searcher. There is a vast amount of information that is not easily navigable; therefore one has to know how to select appropriate material and be aware of bias and issues of validity. Problems arise when students rely solely upon search engines and the Internet without critically evaluating the information they acquire.

Technological advances in the field of education can enable students to dig deeper within content areas such as social studies, and the Internet provides students with an excellent opportunity to draw from more sources (Harp, 1997). The Internet also provides teachers and students with a more exciting way to teach and learn social studies (Harp; Hope, 1998). However, there is a general consensus that, as the Internet is used more in classrooms and for personal research, there needs to be a way to ensure that the information gathered is
credible, objective, valid, current, and reliable (Scott & O’Sullivan, 2000; Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Shrock, 1996; Smith, 1997; Risinger, 1998).

Unfortunately, one can be overwhelmed by the multitude of information available. Therefore, I provided students with the skills necessary to critically examine the content of websites through a series of lesson plans and independent activities to complete. Another downside to using the Internet is the likelihood of plagiarism. Once students fully understand the abundance of good, reliable information, they might be more likely to cut and paste material and call it their own. Therefore, I also focused on how they can effectively use the Internet to find useful information to construct their own research papers, rather than searching for pieces or entire papers online that they simply cut and paste.

This study sought to address two primary questions: (1) to determine if students’ attitudes towards using the Internet as a resource changed as a result of their applying a web evaluation guide, and (2) to determine if the quality of students’ research products improved as a result of web evaluation lessons. To assist in the evaluation, the students’ familiarity and prior use of the Internet with research projects was assessed through a pre-survey as well as reviewing their prior research papers and projects. Finally, taking into consideration progress and curriculum, research projects were assigned individually, allowing class time in the library to search for resources on the Internet and in print materials if applicable.

Creating a way for students to evaluate websites is extremely important. There are many websites that can be considered inappropriate, but often those sites that are untruthful or prejudiced are not considered as improper (Risinger, 1998).
The real problem with incorporating the Internet into one’s research is the lack of content validity within the sites. Unfortunately, many students do not bother to evaluate websites properly. Risinger (1998) states that there are three main types of websites that can cause concern: hate sites, dumb sites (that range from the irrelevant, the factually incorrect, and those that perpetuate urban myths), and conspiracy sites. In general, these are the type of sites that can be the most interesting for students, and once found, they may not search further for accurate information. By providing students with the skills necessary to evaluate websites, they will eliminate sites that are hate related, inaccurate, or conspiracy oriented for more reliable and credible sites. These skills are also applicable to the evaluation of textbooks, newspapers, and television programs and promote valuable life skills in the form of critical thinking.

By critiquing the websites themselves, the students are not only learning the content of the site, but they are also gaining vital critical thinking skills necessary in a democratic society (Risinger, 2000). Changes in the field of education have led to the belief that traditional learning styles and materials need to be supplemented with activities that teach critical thinking and problem solving skills (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002; Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Wilson & Marsh, 1995). The active approach to education is becoming more important as demonstrated by constructivist theory, and the use of the Internet provides an excellent opportunity to apply this method to teaching and learning. In fact, Wilson and Marsh state: “The use of computers...presents the opportunity to revolutionize the way students work and think” (p. 198). Furthermore, a school
culture must be created “that values collaboration, promotes self-reliance, and prepares students with a general set of critical information-handling skills” (Rice & Wilson, 1999, p. 28). Students should be actively engaged in their learning to help them to be critical thinkers and better citizens. By allowing students access to unlimited information, teachers are introducing them not only to the world of social studies, but in reality to the entire world itself.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Relevant Literature

Teachers face dilemmas every day as society changes and schools attempt to meet its citizens' new needs. The classroom and education in general are in a constant state of motion with the literature reviewed supporting this viewpoint. Risinger (1999b) believes we are in the midst of an information revolution with the Internet becoming an integral part of education. As the way teachers and students gather resources changes, so do the learning experiences. There is a shift in the way educators are approaching teaching students, as well as the material students are being expected to master in the social studies (Owens, 1999; Bennett & Scholes, 2001; Van Fossen, 1999). For example, more preservice teacher preparation programs are introducing Internet and technology requirements. It has also been shown that social studies teachers who were provided with classroom access to the Internet as part of their professional preparation were more likely to use it in their teaching (Van Fossen). Furthermore, “formal training in classroom applications” of the Internet was a significant predictor of classroom use (Van Fossen, p. 14). This use of the Internet, therefore, at the college level in teacher preparation programs provides a perfect basis for introducing Internet usage and evaluation into a social studies classroom.

There is a general consensus as to the importance of the Internet in the studying of social studies, but as with any new tool, it brings many difficulties, which often prevent individuals from using it effectively (Van Fossen, 1999; Risinger, 1999b; Berson, 2001; Scott & O’Sullivan, 2000). General issues and
concerns about the Internet often deter educators from using it, and other times they do not know how to effectively incorporate it into the classroom. Sometimes teachers are even worried that students know more about computer use and the Internet than they do (Meyers, 1999). There have been numerous studies done examining how comfortable teachers feel using the Internet, how they use it, and how to better instruct teachers in pre-service training so they can effectively use it in their classrooms (VanFossen; Bennett & Scholes; Scott & O’Sullivan). Because “many teachers have recognized the Internet as a double-edged sword,” it is very important to provide students with the tools to use the Internet effectively so they can use it to its greatest potential (Scott & O’Sullivan, p. 121).

As teachers adapt to these changes, so do the goals of education. For example, cross-content workplace readiness standards and indicators have been put into place that require all teachers to address the skills students will need as they enter the workforce. Standard number 2: “All students will use information, technology, and other tools,” relates directly to Internet use as does the progress indicator 2.6: “access and assess information on specific topics using both technological (e.g., computer, telephone, satellite) and print resources available in libraries or media centers.” Fortunately, there are many ways that using the Internet in the classroom can help achieve these specific standards and the other goals of education. Two of the main goals in education that were directly addressed through this research project are: (a) the teaching of critical thinking and problem solving skills, which will assist in creating effective citizens, and (b) the promotion of student involvement in the learning process (Schneider, 1994).
However, as wonderful a tool as the Internet is in helping to achieve educational goals, teachers and students must also recognize the pitfalls associated with it and learn how to properly use it (Owens, 1999; Scott & O’Sullivan, 2000; Risinger, 1998).

An important goal of education is to teach children how to solve problems and therefore think critically about the world around them (Risinger, 2000). This is a serious challenge for teachers. How can one promote higher order thinking skills? When using technology such as the Internet, students are engaged in the world around them. They become active participants in their own education and they gain the ability to research historical events that are personally relevant to them (Wilson & Marsh, 1995). In this way, critical thinking skills are being promoted. Moreover, traditionally, students were thought to be restricted to the knowledge contained in their classrooms and school libraries with the teacher and the school being the sole authorities. With the Internet students can visit www.google.com or www.refdesk.com and receive hundreds, if not thousands, of hits for any one topic depending on their selection of key words, with the teacher advising the students on how to sort through the material being presented to them via search engines, search directories, and metasearch engines. In this way, the teacher still needs to provide structure and support in the role of a coach and advisor in the learning process (Wilson & Marsh; Hope, 1998).

For a long time, the traditional approach to studying the social studies was rote memorization of facts, dates, and significant events. Today, instead of providing all students with the same learning experiences and what appear to be...
boring historical details, teachers are actively involving their students in the learning process in hopes that students will learn better and come to appreciate the knowledge they acquire (Wilson & Marsh, 1995). When addressing the curriculum standards for social studies, in *Expectations of Excellence*, the following is stated in connection to making learning more meaningful: “rather than memorizing disconnected bits of information or practicing skills in isolation, students learn connected networks of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that they will find useful both in and outside of school” (Schneider, 1994, p. 33).

Furthermore, self-directed learning and personalized instruction are taking an even firmer hold in the field of education with teachers taking the needs and interests of individual students into consideration when preparing their curriculum for their classroom (Brown, 2002; Jenkins & Keefe, 2002). This is key in teaching students how to effectively use the Internet to do research because “learning is not received; it is achieved” (Shiroma, 2000, para. 4). The literature further supports this change to active involvement and meaningful learning experiences (Harp, 1997; Hope). In fact, the Curriculum Standards for Social Studies developed by the National Council for Social Studies [NCSS] states that “meaningful learning activities…encourage students to connect these ideas to their previous knowledge and experience, to think critically, and creatively about them, and to consider their social implications” (Schneider, p. 34). Active involvement and the Internet appear to go hand in hand in the educational field.

Teachers can create a classroom culture that promotes and values cooperative behaviors and self-discipline as well as provides students with a set of
critical thinking skills by adapting their teaching methods to incorporate a variety of techniques. This can be accomplished through the use of the constructivist model and through the use of the Internet in the classroom (Rice & Wilson, 1999). Rice and Wilson found that the NCSS promotes the use of technology to provide students with authentic problem-solving situations. By using the Internet, teachers can create a classroom where “they place in students’ hands the exhilarating power to follow trails of interest, to make connections, to reformulate ideas, and to reach unique conclusions” (p. 29), and therefore participate in the acquisition of their own knowledge. Teachers can become learning guides where the students take responsibility for their own learning (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002). The Internet also provides an entry point to content that would be accessible only later in their education, at the college level, or only to the scholars (Hope, 1998; Risinger, 1999a). More specifically, in the field of history, teachers can provide students with primary sources to enhance their learning and critical thinking skills “through inquiry, investigation, research, and analysis” (Marlow & Page as cited in Shiroma, 2000, para. 5). Fortunately, there are a multitude of websites that provide teachers and students with access to primary source material (Shiroma, 2000; see Appendix A for useful websites).

As demonstrated, traditional learning styles and methods are no longer as applicable and useful as they had been previously, especially since students are supposed to be learning how to function in the real world. The Internet provides a perfect way to interest students in the world around them and demonstrate how closely related the citizens of the world are today (Wilson & Marsh, 1995).
Students can also make a connection to the rest of the world by seeing different perspectives and then generating their own opinions (Harp, 1998). They have a vast pool of information available to them via the Internet which provides the social studies teacher with an excellent opportunity to teach students the value of evaluating information sources. Social studies teachers are charged not only with teaching students the history of the world but also for helping to create effective citizens who can detect bias, evaluate points of view, and examine topics from multiple perspectives. The Internet provides this opportunity (Risinger, 2000).

There are many opportunities to teach students how to evaluate and use resources, even using contemporary social issues from around the world (e.g., the Olympic Games in Australia and the treatment of the aboriginal population) which they can research on the Internet (Risinger, 2000). Yet, just as teachers must instill in their students the ability to detect bias, teachers need to realize that with the ability to read thousands of newspapers from around the world (one portal to these newspapers is www.refdesk.com) and view hundreds of eye witness accounts comes the potential for inaccuracy. In 1998, Risinger argued that “the rules have changed. Students have access to a vast pool of information, much of which is excellent and some of which is inaccurate, confused, and scurrilous, hateful, and a pack of lies” (p. 149). In teaching students critiquing skills to wade through what might be “a pack of lies,” educators are achieving the goal of helping to create effective citizens.

There are many ways in which teachers can employ the Internet in significant ways and use it to its greatest potential and achieve the objectives of
social studies (VanFossen, 1999). When searching the Internet, students will be independently gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating data and their own work. In the end, they will be engaging in their own research and learning the joys and frustrations that historians have faced across the ages (Wilson & Marsh, 1995). Yet, the Internet is useful beyond searching for useful resources. Teachers and students can create a classroom website where student work may be published; links can be provided for online projects and assignments; information regarding homework assignments can be posted; quiz and test dates can be available for both students and parents; or message boards can be provided for easy communication (Risinger, 2000). Other options open to teachers are virtual field trips or virtual tours. Teachers can design and implement these trips to accompany lesson plans, or they can assign students to design their own to present to the class (Cotton, 1999). These virtual field trips can also provide students with first hand learning experiences and allow them to guide the lesson as suggested by the constructivist model (Rice & Wilson, 1999). Yet, another option that allows teachers to incorporate the Internet into the classroom is the use of WebQuests, which are defined as “inquiry-oriented activities in which students interact with resources on the Internet” (Orlando & Levy, 2001, p. 343). There are a variety of ways in which teachers can use WebQuests depending upon length of time, class size, the content and curriculum, and whether teachers want to create their own or use one of the many available WebQuests on the Internet.

When teachers incorporate the Internet into the classroom by using lesson plans, primary source material, virtual field trips, webquests, images, or sound
bytes, they are judging and determining what sites contain valuable and accurate information. When students are researching for their own projects, they may not realize that they need to assume the role of evaluator. Evaluation is an important key in the education process. However, many students are unaware of the fact that the print materials they find in their libraries have already been evaluated at a number of levels to ensure for accuracy, format and scope, authority, objective treatment of relevant issues, and cost. This set of criteria has been used by authoritative sources such as the federal government, subject specialists, or librarians to evaluate whether to include a particular item in the collection of library (Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Brandt, 1996). Risinger (1998) reminds us that even the content taught to students “was filtered through the state and local curriculum guide, state legislative mandates, local school boards, textbook authors, and selection committees, and, finally, the classroom teacher” (p. 148). Yet, today information is available on any topic via the Internet. Therefore, it is recognized that there needs to be evaluative criteria that can be applied to the information found on the Internet.

Brandt (1996) compares information on the Internet “to that found on grocery-store bulletin boards” (para. 7). It may appear important and interesting, but is it reliable and useful? Often people do not realize that searching the Internet does not equate with evaluating the Internet. As stated earlier, when visiting the library, the printed material found there has already been evaluated based on some basic set of criteria, whereas, the criteria the numerous Internet search engines use for selection vary from one service to the next. Furthermore, many search engines
do not have any criteria at all, and if they do, it is often different from those used in libraries, and the basis of relevance is the repetition of the search terms or items provided by the searcher. However, as students need to develop a new set of skills to effectively search on the Internet, they also need to check for validity, reliability, and authenticity. Further, the searchers also need to determine if the information is pertinent. Just because it is interesting does not mean it is related to the task at hand and, therefore, they need to filter their own information (Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Brehm, 1999).

Just as with any powerful tool, the Internet can pose many challenges for teachers who wish to incorporate this technology component into their lesson plans. Going to the Internet may seem like an easy and fast way to get an answer to a simple or even a complicated question or problem. However, the literature (e.g., Berson, 2001; Brandt, 1996; November, 2001) identifies many problems and concerns that surround the use of the Internet in the classroom including: (a) cyber predators; (b) inappropriate content and material, which may contain pornography, violence, hate, misinformation, or hoaxes; (c) a flood of unimportant information; (d) the chance that while searching the Internet one may become the subject of harassment; and (e) the age-old problem of plagiarism. These are all key elements teachers must take into consideration when they allow students to use the Internet as a point of reference; however, the Internet is too important as a tool to not include in the classroom. Berson and Berson (1999, p. 149) call it “a new exciting city awaiting exploration,” but as the problems and concerns present themselves,
teachers find it is a remarkable city with many pitfalls and dark corners to be navigated.

All the problems the Internet brings are valuable and offer opportunities to teach students. The one specific problem I focused upon involved website content and more specifically that of unreliable content. A substantial amount of the literature states that the greatest problem of inappropriate content, in the way of unreliable or inaccurate information, provides an excellent opportunity to teach students valuable critical thinking skills, and this should start with determining what is useful (Risinger, 1998, 2000; Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Scott & O’ Sullivan, 2000). As demonstrated, there is an overwhelming quantity of information. For example, there are more history websites than any person can usefully review and use, either in the classroom as a teacher or as a researcher, and many are not evaluated for the searcher (Shiveley & VanFossen; Risinger, 1998, 2000, 2001). However, instead of ignoring this wealth of information when teachers run into problems, such as *dumb* sites, they can use it as an opportunity to provide students with necessary critical thinking skills. By applying these skills to the Internet, one can extend the central task that engages teachers, that is, the fostering of critically thinking individuals and teach students to become primary screeners in filtering their own information. In creating effective thinkers, the responsibility of the teacher shifts. When the teacher is no longer the sole authority of knowledge, the students take on a more active role in their own education (Shiveley & VanFossen).
There is a general consensus in the literature about the criteria that students and teachers should use to evaluate websites. These include asking questions that relate to the authority or authorship of the site, the currency of the site, the general content, the objectivity of the site, and finally how the scholarly world feels about the site, which can be determined by looking at reviews, recommendations, and the bibliography. The questions can be further subdivided to examine authority, accuracy, quality of writing, scope, and form of a particular website (Scott & O’Sullivan, 2000; Shiveley & VanFossen, 1999; Shrock, 1996; Smith, 1997; Risinger, 1998). These criteria figured prominently in my research project as I developed guides for the students to use in evaluating websites and print materials for usefulness (see Appendix B for website addresses used as sources for creating web evaluation guide). The literature emphasizes the importance of technology in the classrooms and provides teachers with many ways to appropriately incorporate it into lesson plans. However, it is also important to use the Internet carefully and wisely. Numerous authors and educators provide advice and guidelines on how to evaluate the Internet beyond merely searching for websites (Shiveley & Van Fossen, 1999; Risinger, 1998; Valenza, 2001). These guidelines can be developed into a set of criteria to assist students in their search for knowledge. There are a large number of social studies-related websites that students and teachers may find. In fact it has been suggested that “75 percent to 85 percent of websites available on the World Wide Web (WWW) have relevance to one or more of the subject areas typically associated with the social studies curriculum,” but detailed
questions should be asked to ensure the information is accurate and appropriate (Risinger, 1999a, p. 27).

In general, the literature demonstrates that students are provided with a massive amount of information that is often unorganized and sometimes inaccurate (Risinger, 1998; November, 2001). As a social studies teacher, nothing is more important than dispelling misinformation and providing students with an accurate, objective view of history. In creating a guide of evaluative criteria for students to use, I provided a scaffold for them when they are researching on their own (see appendix E for web evaluation guide). Because of the volume of misinformation on the Internet, students need a structured way to evaluate the information, and teachers can provide this structure for them. However, before providing them with this guide, I gathered information regarding their general attitude about research and the use of technology (Internet), and then I conducted a series of classes where we applied the criteria to websites and primary documents.

In conclusion, the following research questions have guided this study:

1. Have students’ attitudes changed towards using the Internet as a resource after applying a web evaluation guide? (In other words, will they be more likely to use it as a resource, once they know how to use it more effectively?)

2. Are web evaluation lessons effective in assisting students to produce higher quality research projects?
CHAPTER 3

Study Methodology

The Internet is a very valuable tool that is often misused due to lack of critical thinking skills on the part of the searcher. Students may mistakenly perceive the Internet as the best answer for all research projects with an abundance of accurate information. Other students may feel overwhelmed by the hundreds of sites devoted to one historical event. Shiveley and VanFossen (1999) state that “the very characteristics that makes the Internet so valuable and popular…is also the medium’s primary drawback” (p. 43). Individuals have instant access to what seems like unlimited quantities of information. By learning how to use the Internet effectively, students gain valuable critical thinking skills as they evaluate websites and the information they find during their own research.

Since the literature (e.g., Risinger, 1998) demonstrates that students and teachers face many challenges when they go online, I conducted an intervention in the way of several lessons that taught students the skills necessary to evaluate source material for scope, content, authority, clarity, objectivity, and currency. The instruction was provided in hopes that the students’ research projects would contain more useful and purposeful resources.

Data Collection Approach

There were several things to consider before starting this research project. First, the project needed to fit into the social studies curriculum of Williamstown High School. Since the ultimate goal for the students was to conduct their own research using a web evaluation process through a critical guide provided as a part
of the treatment, topics assigned were aligned with the current area of study. Previous essays, papers, and research projects provided a starting point to ascertain the students' prior knowledge, as well as an opportunity to evaluate their use of the Internet as a research tool before the treatment. I also collected several of the web addresses used in previous research projects to review with the students and later evaluate using the web evaluation criteria. The next step was the collection of all the necessary consent and policy agreement forms regarding Internet access and usage. Once the consent forms were collected, I designed and implemented a pre-survey to measure the students' access to and use of the Internet, as well as their attitude regarding Internet use. After the students' third marking period projects were completed, they were turned in and assessed using a rubric (see Appendix C). The students were also required to complete a web evaluation guide for each Internet source they listed in their bibliography. Finally, a post-survey, which was a modified version of the pre-survey, was administered to the students to determine if there was a change in their attitudes regarding Internet use as a resource.

Description of the Research Site

My research was conducted at Williamstown High School while student teaching in a ninth grade world history class. The classroom had one computer with Internet access, while the media center had a computer lab available with approximately 30 computers with Internet access which teachers requested in advance for specified days. There were also approximately 12 computers with
Internet access in the main section of the media center for students to use during study periods, class trips to the media center, and after school.

*Subjects and Samples*

The composition of my research groups was predetermined; however I worked with three different classes (one honors and two college prep) in order to better represent the diversity of the school and community, as well as to achieve a more representative sample of the high school at large. The three classes totaled 74 students with 22, 24, and 28 in each individual class. All the students were required to complete the research assignment which was incorporated into the curriculum as their third marking period research project; however, only 65 students participated in the pre-survey. All three classes received web evaluation lessons appropriate to their level and point or place in the curriculum. Finally, after the students’ projects were completed, turned in, and graded, a post-survey was administered, in which 46 students took part. Those students who did not participate in either or both of the surveys were either absent from class or declined to complete the surveys (see Appendix D for pre-survey and Appendix E for post-survey).

*Data Collection*

In order to successfully apply my research project, I administered pre- and post-surveys, implemented Internet evaluation lesson plans, and provided students with a web evaluation guide and appropriate research projects of their own. Because my project encompassed several key parts, it took place over the course of my student teaching. The different parts were incorporated appropriately across
the curriculum, with the assistance of my cooperating teacher, so the students possessed the information necessary to begin their own research using the evaluation techniques they had learned. Several weeks after my arrival, I distributed my pre-survey gathering general background information on the students’ knowledge and use of computers and the Internet. This helped to establish a baseline regarding their attitudes toward using the Internet as a research resource and prior and current use of the Internet. This pre-survey was distributed without an introduction to the students to ensure that I received responses that were as honest as possible. After the surveys were returned by the students (folded and placed on my desk), we discussed the students’ third marking period research projects. A series of lessons then followed at appropriate intervals where students learned how to effectively search the Internet and evaluate websites based upon predetermined criteria. As indicated earlier, after the lessons were completed, a post-survey was distributed and collected.

*Variables to be Studied*

This research project focused upon several variables. The independent variable in this study was the Internet evaluation lesson plans that the students received that assisted them in applying the web evaluation guide during their research project. The first dependent variable was their performance in doing Internet research as measured by the quality of their written reports. The quality of effectively using the Internet as a resource depended on the knowledge they gained through the evaluation lessons. I examined the effects of the Internet evaluation lesson plans and the extent to which they affected the critiquing method and
critical thinking. The second dependent variable was the change in their attitudes regarding the Internet as a resource. This was examined through the use of the pre- and post-surveys.

Description of the Action Taken

The first lesson consisted of an activity in the computer lab called Searching for Search Tools where students took their chosen topic and used two search engines, one directory, and two metasearch engines to discover the possible websites that they might be able to use for their research project. They answered a series of questions in conjunction with their findings to critically examine the importance of the results of their Internet search (see Appendix F for lesson plan and Appendix G for Searching the Internet worksheet).

The next step was to begin the actual evaluation lessons. However, before we went to the computer lab to evaluate a series of websites based upon an exercise designed by Valenza (2001), the classes read through a packet that examined each of the key aspects of the web evaluation guide (see Appendix H for packet and Appendix I for web evaluation guide). The packet, How Can You Tell if That Website is Good?, asked questions relating to authority or authorship, objectivity, scope, currency, clarity or quality of writing, the bibliography, and the accuracy or validity of the websites. The students and I read through the packet, examining each aspect individually by looking at examples I provided from the Internet (e.g., Ryan, 2002; Wolfram Memorial Library, 1996; Plimoth, 2002). This lesson continued the next day in the computer lab with students examining four to five websites (see Appendix J for list of websites). They took on the roles
of various specialists, in order to evaluate and rank the sites selected in advance. With the use of their packet, the students ranked the websites based upon: authority or authorship, objectivity, scope, currency, quality of writing, bibliography or recommendations, and accuracy or validity. To justify their rankings, the students were also required to prepare written notes in the appropriate place on their charts. Finally, in assessing this assignment, the students completed a rubric in which they graded themselves using four standards. Their score was combined with my own score to create a final grade for the web evaluation activity (see Appendix K for website ranking sheet and Appendix L for student evaluation rubric).

The next steps were for the students to effectively use the web evaluation guides while completing their third marking period research papers. As a class we spent 2-3 days working on the projects in the media center, and the students were also given time in the classroom to prepare their paper, ask questions, and use print materials brought from the media center into the classroom.

After their papers were completed, turned in, and assessed, the students were provided with a post-survey. These data were then compared to the results from the pre-survey and were analyzed to assess whether or not their attitudes had changed regarding Internet use for school work.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed and interpreted with caution because the individuals within the groups were not randomly selected, and therefore, they are not able to be statistically generalized to the student population at large. The
results of my research also hinged on the amount of effort the students put into learning the evaluation methods, using the web evaluation guide, and doing the actual research. Since a percentage of the students put forth only a lackluster effort, their end results were not the same as those students who enjoyed spending hours in the library or surfing the Internet looking for resources. In fact, several students did not complete the assignment, and several others committed plagiarism in varying forms. Those who committed plagiarism at the most severe level, that is, copying their entire paper, were given the opportunity to redo their project with a 30-point penalty for plagiarism. Of those given this chance, only 2 chose not to redo their project. Those students who did not turn in the assignment on the predetermined date were spoken to individually and reminded of the consequences by both myself and my cooperating teacher. Of the 7 who did not turn it in on the due date, 4 completed their third marking period research project and received a lowered grade (minus 10 points for each day late).

After examining and grading their papers using a rubric, I reviewed the web evaluation guides. When I examined their guides, I looked to see if it was easier for the students to navigate the endless webpages found using search engines, especially since the students now possessed the necessary skills and knew the key elements to look for that determine the importance and validity of the site. Finally, the research projects and the work cited pages demonstrated if and how the students used the Internet in completing the task (see Appendix M for the third marking period project requirements for both the honors and college prep placement).
CHAPTER 4
Findings and Discussion

Introduction

Hope (1998) wrote that “the Internet...[is a] resource that can contribute directly to transforming social studies teaching” (p. 24). Even students recognize the importance of the computer and the Internet. Of 65 students who completed a pre-survey, 89% of the students stated that they believe the Internet should be used in the classroom. This very important tool is one that will allow students to become more actively involved in their own education; however it does bring with it problems and pitfalls as would any educational tool (Owens, 1999; Scott & O’Sullivan, 2000; Risinger, 1998). In order to overcome these problems and pitfalls, I developed a series of web evaluation lesson plans and a guide for students to use independently after researching and collating the information and data available on Internet evaluation.

Findings: Pre- and Post-Surveys

Access to the Internet in schools has grown, while use in the classroom still lags behind (VanFossen, 1999). Of the students surveyed, 86% were found to have a general understanding of what is available on the Internet for school use, having used it as a source previously, but many are unaware of the dangers in the form of inaccuracy and unreliability. Fortunately, less than 30% of the students surveyed on both the pre- and post-surveys respectively reported that, most of the time, they usually accept everything on the Internet as true and accurate.
Overall, a total of 74 students participated in my research project. Each student was required to complete a third marking period research project that consisted of a 3-5 page written paper with a specified number of sources, depending upon their course level, and the completion of a web evaluation guide for each source that came from the Internet.

Figure 1
World History Placement

![World History Placement Graph]

Data are reported in percentages.

A total of 65 students participated in the pre-survey, with a total of 46 students participating in the post-survey. In each survey, approximately two thirds of the students were in the college prep courses and one third were in honors courses (see Figure 1).

*Home Computer Access.*

An overwhelming percentage of the students indicated on the surveys that they had home computer access (see Figure 2). Of the 65 students surveyed in the pre-survey, 93% responded positively that they had access to a computer at home,
while 3%, both taking the college prep level world history course, did not have home computer access. In the post-survey, all (100%) students reported having access to a home computer.

Figure 2
Home Computer Access

![Home Computer Access](image)

Data are reported in percentages.

**Internet Access at Home and Length of Access.**

In the pre- and post-surveys students were asked if they had Internet access at home, and on the pre-survey, to ascertain their familiarity with it as a resource, they were asked how long they have had Internet access (see Figure 3). This question was not repeated on the post-survey. In general, a substantial majority of the students (79%) have had Internet access for more than 4-5 years (see Figure 4). From the pre- to the post-survey, home Internet access increased by about 12%. In the post-survey an overwhelming 96% of the students indicated they have Internet access at home.
Figure 3
Internet Access at Home

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Pre-survey</th>
<th>Post-survey</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data are reported in percentages.

Figure 4
Length of Internet Access

Access to the Internet at School.

Technically, all students have Internet access at school if they have a signed acceptable use policy (AUP). Of the 64 students who answered this question on the pre-survey, only 3% stated that they did not have access at school to the
Internet (see Figure 5). Since the students have access to the Internet in the media center and classrooms, this question was not repeated on the post-survey.

Figure 5
Internet Access at School

![Internet Access at School](image)

Data are reported in percentages.

**Internet Use: Frequency at Home and School.**

It can be inferred that students are very aware of the benefits and usefulness of the Internet; however, a majority of students stated they use the Internet more frequently at home rather than at school. This can be due to a number of factors: (a) computer access; (b) Internet access; (c) more available time; (d) number of accessible computers; (e) signed or unsigned AUP; and (f) class schedule. Of the 65 students who participated in the pre-survey, approximately 49% said they access the Internet a few times a day at home, with approximately 14% accessing it once a day (see Figure 6).
Figure 6
Frequency of Internet Use at Home

![Frequency of Internet Use at Home](image)

Data are reported in percentages.

In most areas, the results of the post-survey essentially paralleled the results of the pre-survey in relation to frequency of Internet use at school and approximated the frequency rate of Internet use at home (see Figure 7).

Figure 7
Frequency of Internet Use at School

![Frequency of Internet Use at School](image)

Data are reported in percentages.
Should the Internet be Used in the Classroom?

The majority of the students, 87% in the pre-survey and 91% in the post-survey, indicated that they thought the Internet should be used in the classroom (see Figure 8). In general, there was not a significant change in students' opinions of Internet use in the classroom.

Figure 8

Should the Internet be used in the classroom?

Data are reported in percentages.

Usefulness and Frequency for Internet.

Students were asked to report their frequency of use as well as their perceived usefulness of the Internet for seven key areas in the pre-survey: (a) research for projects; (b) e-mail in connection with class work; (c) daily homework assignments; (d) tutorials; (e) web quests; (f) virtual field trips; and, (g) class work (e.g., Do Nows or group work) (see Tables 1 and 2).

In the post-survey, the question relating to usefulness and frequency of use of the Internet was narrowed to examine four key areas: (a) research for projects; (b) e-mail in connection with class work; (c) daily homework assignments; and, (d)
classwork (e.g. Do Nows or group work). An overwhelming percentage of the students responded that they believed the Internet was very useful for research for projects (73% for pre-survey (see Table 1) and 87% for post-survey (see Table 3)). Of the students surveyed after the treatment, there was an increase in the percentage of students who said they would use the Internet for research for projects. Fifty-six percent of the students in the pre-survey stated they frequently use the Internet, while 82% in the post-survey stated they frequently use the Internet for research for projects. In the other categories surveyed in the post-survey, the responses remained similar to those given in the pre-survey (compare Tables 1 and 3 for usefulness data; compare Tables 2 and 4 for frequency data).

Table 1
Usefulness of Internet: Pre-Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usefulness: Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>research for projects</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>email for classwork</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>daily homework</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>webquests</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>virtual field trips</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
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</table>

Data are reported in percentages.
Table 2

Frequency of Internet Use: Pre-Survey

<table>
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<th>Frequency: Pre-survey</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<th>Never</th>
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<td>research for projects</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>email for classwork</td>
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<td>daily homework</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
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</table>

Data are reported in percentages.

Table 3

Usefulness of Internet: Post-Survey

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<td>email for classwork</td>
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<td>daily homework</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data are reported in percentages.

Table 4

Frequency of Internet Use: Post-Survey

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<tr>
<th>Frequency: Post-Survey</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
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<td>email for classwork</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>

Data are reported in percentages.

Evaluation of the Internet by Students.

The students were asked two questions directly related to the evaluation of the Internet. The first question asked them whether they accept everything they see on the Internet as truthful and accurate: (a) most of the time; (b) sometimes, or (c) never. In answering this question on the pre-survey, approximately 73% stated
that they sometimes accept everything they see or read on the Internet as being true and accurate. This is compared to approximately 22% who accept it most of the time, and 7% who never accept everything they see or read on the Internet as being true and accurate. There was no significant change in the percentages of students in relation to truthfulness and accuracy from the pre- to the post-survey (see Figure 9).

Figure 9
Acceptance of Truthfulness and Accuracy

![Acceptance of Truthfulness & Accuracy](chart)

Data are reported in percentages.

In both the pre- and post-surveys, students were asked one open-ended question. Of the 65 students who completed the pre-survey, 19% left the open-ended question blank, and 81% chose to answer how they evaluate what they see on the Internet to determine its accuracy or truthfulness. Generalities can be inferred from the responses. The students’ responses fall into seven key categories based upon their answers to the open-ended question: (a) it is all true; (b) no evaluation necessary; (c) last three letters; (d) ask someone else; (e) use only
known sources; (f) examine the author; (g) double check; and (h) other. Some
students appear to rely upon one method, while others mention a number of ways
they evaluate the Internet combining their answers to include checking with
someone else or double checking the website with other sites or books.

The categories varied across the students in the college prep and honors
placements. A total of 3 students replied similarly that they assume everything
they see on the Internet is true. One students stated: “I figure its all true or it
shouldn’t be on the website or the Internet.” Another 3 students reported that they
did not think an evaluation was necessary. Four specifically mention using the last
three letters of a website address to evaluate the information as accurate or true.
For example, one student stated, “If it is a .org or a .gov, they are usually good
sources to trust.” Four students mention that they check with either a family
member or a teacher.

Several students, a total of 17 (26%), state that they use only known or
reliable sources on the Internet. However, the idea of known, reliable sources
stretches from education sites to those attached to www.geocities.com. Only 1
student specifically mentioned geocities in his or her answer to question number
12: “I usually look to see if it is a well known website like geocities and look to
see how detailed the article is and who wrote it.” This statement comes from a
student who usually accepts everything he or she sees on the Internet as being true
and accurate most of the time. Examining four other direct quotes from the pre-
surveys provides further enlightenment into how students evaluate the Internet.
• “It often depends on what I know [about] the source, and its dependency.”
• “I look at the author and publisher. I look to see if the publisher of the site is believable/well known. I also trust sites that are from magazines, newspapers, etc (sic).”
• “I first try to find out if the source is trustworthy and not just someone who writes anything. I go to education sites, which are usually full of correct information.”
• “If a website on the Internet is well known and used by a lot of people, most times I would consider it to be truthful and accurate.”

There were 6 students (9%) who looked directly at the authors of the websites to determine accuracy and truthfulness. Examining several students’ exact answers demonstrates the level to which they believe an author’s identity is important when evaluating the Internet.

• “I go to education sites, which are usually full of correct information.”
• “I look at the author and publisher.”
• “I evaluate what I see on the Internet what’s (sic) true and accurate by looking at the author and the year it was written.”
• “To determine whether what I see is accurate I usually make sure it is not a website created by a student because their information may not be accurate.”
• “When I see information from a website is made by someone on their home computer, it’s usually not reliable. I’d have to go to yahoo or google to recieve (sic) truthful information on my topic.”

Thirty-one percent of the students mentioned the need to double check a source on the Internet. These sources ranged from other websites to books, newspapers, magazines, and even individuals. One student in the honors placement class stated, “I compare the Internet websites when I am researching a topic.” This idea can be further expanded by yet another student’s statement: “I usually check out a few sites and if all the info (sic) is pretty much the same, then I believe it, But if not I don’t.” Another student in the honors placement class
stated, "I evaluate what I see on the Internent (sic) by comparing it to other sources. If it shows up more than once, there must be some truth to it." A student, who indicated that the Internet is very useful for research for projects, in the college prep placement stated, that he or she “compare[s] it with common sence (sic), and sometimes do research on something to find the truth.”

One college prep student falls into two categories: ask someone else and double check. He or she stated, “I normally use sites directed by my teachers that are accurate, if not that I’ll always check out a book just to make sure.” Yet another student wrote, “I compare the information to books or other sites I found.” Other students also indicated that they look to books. For example, one student wrote, “I read section of a book on it.” One honors student, who has had Internet access for 4-5 years, took it a step further by combining the two methods. He or she wrote, “If I find information on the Internet that I will use, I usually use two or three other sites and compare them to get the real information. If they are all different, I go to the library and look for the topic.”

Written Research Projects

Students’ individual scores demonstrate the differences between how they fulfilled each obligation in the third marking period research project. As demonstrated in Tables 5 and 6, most students lost more points by not following the specifications of the assignments and by not providing a complete bibliography. The honors class averaged a total of 13 points out of a possible 15 for following directions, and the college prep classes averaged 12 points out of 15, which is not a significant difference. When examining the points achieved for the bibliography,
the honors classes averaged 19 out of a possible 20 points, while the college prep classes averaged 12 out of 20.

Table 5

Third Marking Period Grading Rubric Honors

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Data are reported in raw score points.
Table 6

Third Marking Period Grading Rubric College Prep

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</table>

Data are reported in raw score points.
Discussion

In order to examine my first research question (i.e., Have students’ attitudes changed towards using the Internet as a resource after applying a web evaluation guide to a research project?), it is necessary to review the data from several of the pre- and post-survey questions. First, was there an increase in the number of students who stated they would frequently use the Internet for research? Second, was there an increase in the number of students who only sometimes believe that everything they see on the Internet is true and accurate? In both the pre- and the post-surveys, the combined percentage of students who indicated that they frequently and sometimes use the Internet for research for projects was very high (88% on the pre-survey; 91% on the post-survey). These data show that substantial change with regard to this question was not possible, given the relatively high responses on both the pre- and post-surveys. Nevertheless, there was a slight increase of 3% in the percentage of students who use the Internet for research projects. However, the data suggest that some students use the Internet more for communication, entertainment, and leisure than research. This is supported by several students’ statements in conjunction with pre-survey question 12. For example, the following statements were taken directly from the pre-survey:

- “I read fansites for my favorite bands.”
- “I don’t evaluate anything. On the Internet I’m usually on blackplanet or Daflavaa, or some rap site. So usually not looking for acurate (sic) things.”
- “Most of the time...I don’t use the Internet to browse for things. I’d rather chat.”
When examining my second research question (i.e., Are web evaluation lessons effective in assisting students to produce higher quality research projects) in connection to the pre- and post-surveys and the other information gathered, I came to realize there are several things to take into consideration before answering this question. When student involvement is a factor, teachers can only do so much to help them create a higher quality product. In general, the things that really hurt students’ grades for their third marking period project were the bibliography, title page, and length of the paper. Another key factor in lowering students’ grades was the number of students who turned in papers late thus creating a dilemma where their starting grade was sometimes as low as 70.

To assist students in succeeding more in using the web evaluation guide, a longer series of lessons would be most beneficial, as well as additional class time to examine examples in each of the areas discussed in the guide. Even though I did not see a direct connection to the web evaluation lesson plans and the students research projects, I did find a connection between the lessons and the post-survey.

The percentage of students who answered the open-ended question in the surveys dropped from 80% to 74% answering question number 10 in the post-survey. However, the answers were a little more sophisticated and more distributed across the spectrum of categories. As in the pre-survey, some students did fit into more than one of the following six categories created from the student responses: (a) “I don’t;” (b) look at other sites to compare; (c) last three letters; (d) examine the author; (e) when was it updated?; and, (f) other. These statements also provides examples of how students have incorporated the
information from my web evaluation lessons and the web evaluation guide into the knowledge base.

The answers ranged from simple two word responses, "common sense," to more complex ideas. For example, one student wrote, "the author and when it was last updated," combining two ideas discussed in the web evaluation guide. There were also areas in which students were in agreement over what criteria to use to evaluate the Internet. For example, a total of 9 students, 4 honors and 5 college prep, stated that they look at other sites, authors, and books to compare information. All 9 of these students indicated in the post-survey that they thought the Internet was important for research and use if frequently for that purpose. Some students also mentioned items that I specifically focused upon in my web evaluation lessons (see Table 7).

Table 7
Sample Questions and Student Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Can You Tell if That Website is Good? Questions</th>
<th>Student Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who made it?</td>
<td>&quot;If the makers of the site are popular or respectful and known to be accurate.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Look at the publisher of makers of the site.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of webpage is it?</td>
<td>&quot;what type of website&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I look to see if it's a reliable organization (ex. ends in .edu).&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you find out about this website? (bibliography/recommendation)</td>
<td>&quot;I look to see if it has an author and other resources&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just because it is on the web doesn't mean that is accurate or true.</td>
<td>&quot;you go to truthful sites; like History.com&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five students specifically mentioned looking at the last three letters of a website address to examine if it is a .com, .gov, or a .edu website, which was specifically discussed in my web evaluation lessons. The students examined the objectivity of websites by asking several key questions and by examining whether it was developed by an organization, commercial enterprise, government agency, or educational institution. However, “by [looking at] what the last 3 letters are on the website” are, students can still encounter problems (November, 2001). One student wrote, “If it is from a credible source, such as a university professor’s site or a historian, then it most likely 100% factual. For other sources, it would have to be determined by what source it’s from and what information it pertains to.” This can still lead to problems as demonstrated by November in *Technology and Learning* where a student, Zack, discovered a website designed and authored by a professor from Northwestern University who explains the existence of concentration camps during World War II as merely a means to fight typhus carried by lice. “From Zack’s perspective, it’s a valid source from a tenured professor at a top university. It has a publication date in the 1990s. It’s on the Internet. It must be ‘true’” (November, p. 42). Students are often taught the skills necessary to surf the Internet, but as demonstrated through the surveys and November, many students lack the necessary critical thinking skills. Professors with biased views, as well as college students, can post websites and attach the websites to their college or university’s website and therefore their site can possess the .edu ending. If a student doing research on the Internet only uses this evaluation criteria to examine the accuracy and validity of the website, they may
find their information is biased or incorrect. Therefore, students must take into consideration other criteria, which were provided through my web evaluation lesson plans to the students and examine more then one aspect of the website.

Two students specifically mentioned the need to look for when the website was last updated. "I see when the last time it was updated and make sure the authors name /or point of contact is stated." These are both things that were discussed directly in my web evaluation lessons and the packet.

The literature review motivated the design of my lesson plans, one of the independent variables in this research. In the review, it was suggested that one of the goals of a social studies educator is to provide students with opportunities to enhance students’ critical thinking skills. I believe this was achieved through the web evaluation lessons, both Searching for Search Tools and the Web Evaluation. In these two cases, students were required to accomplish several objectives. These objectives are as follows for the Searching for Search Tools lesson plan:

1. After completing the handout, Searching the Internet, students will be able to navigate through web searches by evaluating the sites found for relevancy, using a set of defined criteria, to their third marking period project.

2. After completing this activity, students will have gathered several websites to be used as sources for their research projects.
The following two objectives were met by the students in the *Web Evaluation*

lesson plan:

1. After completing the web evaluation activity, students will be able to navigate
   various web sites on related topics by evaluating the sites found using a set of
   defined criteria.

2. After completing this activity, students will be able to evaluate and analyze web
   sites in relation to their third marking period projects.

It was also stated that students must take on a more active role and become an
active participant in their own education. This goal or idea was incorporated
through my use of cooperative groups, class discussions, and individualized
research projects. In general, students already possess a firm understanding of the
Internet and its use as a resource.
CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusion

The technological advances in the field of education are providing both teachers and students with wonderful opportunities to test the boundaries of the classroom, whether it be virtual tours, WebQuests, communication, or using the Internet for research. However, as shown throughout this study, advancements in any area or field come wrought with many dangers. How do teachers and students effectively use what is available on the Internet? How can they tell if the information they found is truthful and accurate? These questions, and others that pertain to content validity of websites, can be answered through critically evaluating the Internet and the resources available online. Therefore, teachers can create critical thinkers and provide students with more opportunities to become active participants in the classroom.

In examining the Internet, its usefulness as a resource, and the idea of critical evaluation, this study proposed two questions:

1. Have students' attitudes changed towards using the Internet as a resource after applying a web evaluation guide?

2. Are web evaluation lessons effective in assisting students to produce higher quality research projects?

In trying to answer these two questions, I prepared pre- and post-surveys, a series of web evaluation lesson plans, a web evaluation guide, and a student research project. Through the critical examination of these items, I have concluded that the majority of students already possessed a firm understanding of the usefulness of
the Internet as a resource; however through the application of a web evaluation guide and the lessons, I provided students with new ways to evaluate and examine the resources they find on the Internet.

In relation to whether or not web evaluation lessons are effective in assisting students to produce higher quality research projects, I believe that this question was not fully answered by my research project. As noted earlier, any project involving students hinges on the amount of their participation. Therefore, there were many factors contributing to both my lessons and the students’ research projects. In general, I believe that only a small minority of the students connected the lesson plans, web evaluation guide, and their research projects to one another. The rest of the students merely saw the lessons and assignments as one more obligation to be completed. I suggest that this dilemma can be overcome by incorporating several more web evaluation lesson plans and by connecting them more directly to individual student research projects. Since learning is both “an individual and a social process,” as well as “a lifelong process” (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002, para. 5), teachers need to take into consideration how they can effectively involve all students directly in their lesson plans. If possible, lessons can be developed into a more personalized educational plan for each student, allowing the students to see the connection between web evaluation in general and their specific research projects. However, this idea does consume a lot of classroom time, with the teacher as guide and coach, and therefore it is more difficult to achieve, especially in my setting as a student teacher. Continuing with the idea of advancing and incorporating items more closely related to students’ needs and
interests, as well as to further develop critical thinking skills, teachers could use websites more closely related to social issues, such as those suggested by Risinger (2000). By examining social issues, teachers would also be meeting the needs of the social studies core content standards. I suggest that further research needs to be done in relation to my second research question, to see if web evaluation lessons are effective in assisting students to produce higher quality research projects.

In conclusion, I believe that the majority of the participants in this study already possessed a firm understanding of the dangers and merits of the Internet. In general, whether it is from prior knowledge learned surfing the Internet at home or lesson plans designed and implemented by teachers in the classroom, students are ready to face the challenges of incorporating resources gleamed from the Internet into their educational experiences. Now it is up to the teachers to incorporate the Internet effectively into their classrooms.
LIST OF REFERENCES


VanFossen, P. J. (1999). Teachers would have to be crazy not to use the Internet!: A preliminary analysis of the use of the Internet/www by secondary social studies teachers in Indiana. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies, Orlando, FL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 438 205)


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Appendix A
Useful Websites for Primary Source Material
Useful Websites for Primary Source Material

World War I Document Archive
http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/

American Memory
Historical Collections for the National Digital Library
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amhome.html

Internet Modern History Sourcebook
http://fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html

This website also provides links to Ancient History Sourcebook, Medieval Sourcebook, African, East Asian, Indian, Islamic, Jewish, Women's, Global, and Science Sourcebooks.

The Avalon Project at Yale Law School
http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm
Appendix B
Website Addresses Used as Sources for Creating Web Evaluation Guide
Website Addresses Used as Sources for Creating Web Evaluation Guide

Evaluating Web sites: What makes a web site good?

Critical evaluation of a web site: Secondary school level

Criteria for evaluation of Internet information resources
http://www.vuw.ac.nz/~agsmith/evaln/.

Evaluating web pages: a WebQuest
http://mciunix.mciu.k12.pa.us/~spjweb/evalwebteach.html

Evaluating Internet based information
http://www.lme.mankato.edu/class/629/wid.html.
Appendix C
Third Marking Period Grading Rubric
3rd MP Project Grading Rubric

Name:
Topic:
Early/On-time/Late

Grade Breakdown:
(15) Followed directions:
  3 - Title Page
  4 - Adequate Length
  4 - Included necessary materials/demonstrated the importance of topic
  4 - Proper Format

(65) Content:
  20 - Shows research
  10 - Own work (not plagiarized)
  10 - Paper logically organized & stays on topic
  20 - Material adequately covers topic
  5 - Spelling/Grammar

(20) Bibliography:
  5 - Appropriate number of sources
  10 - Refers to cites in paper
  5 - Properly organized

General Comments:
Appendix D
Pre-Survey
Social Studies and Internet Use

This survey is being carried out as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested and none will be reported. If you choose not to participate, or change your mind about participating, you are assured that your decision will have no effect on your grade or any other criteria in this class.

1) What level of World History are you currently enrolled in? (Mark only one)
   ____ College Prep  ____ Honors

2) Do you have access to a computer at home? (Mark only one)
   ____ Yes  ____ No

3) Do you have access to the Internet at home? (Mark only one)
   ____ Yes  ____ No

4) How frequently do you usually use the Internet at home? (Mark only one)
   ____ A few times a day
   ____ Once a day
   ____ About every other day
   ____ A few times a week
   ____ About once a week
   ____ Less than once a week
   ____ I don't usually use the Internet at home

5) Do you have access to the Internet at school? (Mark only one)
   ____ Yes  ____ No

6) How frequently do you usually use the Internet at school? (Mark only one)
   ____ A few times a day
   ____ Once a day
   ____ About every other day
   ____ A few times a week
   ____ About once a week
   ____ Less than once a week
   ____ I don't usually use the Internet at school

7) Do you believe the Internet should be used in the classroom? (Mark only one)
   ____ Yes  ____ No  ____ Don't know
8) In this question, you are asked (a) to indicate how useful you think it is to use the Internet for each of the following and (b) how frequently do you use the Internet for each of the following? (Mark only one response in each category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Useful</td>
<td>Useful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research for projects</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail in connection with class work</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily homework assignments</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Quests</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual field trips</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class work (e.g., Do Nows or group work)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9) Do you usually accept everything you see or read on the Internet as being true and accurate? (Mark only one)

___ Most of the time  ___ Sometimes  ___ Never

10) How long have you had access to the Internet? (Mark only one)

___ Less than one year  ___ 1-3 years  ___ 4-5 years  ___ 6-8 years  ___ More than 8 years

11) Please indicate the extent to which each of the following occurs? (Mark one response for each item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Much</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to use the Internet to gather background information for school projects or class discussions.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am assigned to use the Internet/WWW for class work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to use email to communicate with my teacher and/or peers regarding school work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My classes have developed webpage(s) for school or for a specific class.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet has been used in lesson plans by my teachers.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>My teachers have taken me on virtual field trips.</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>
Please answer the following question in complete sentences.

12) How do you evaluate what you see on the Internet to determine its accuracy or truthfulness?

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix E
Post-Survey
Social Studies and Internet Use

This survey is being carried out as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested and none will be reported. If you choose not to participate, or change your mind about participating, you are assured that your decision will have no effect on your grade or any other criteria in this class.

1) What level of World History are you currently enrolled in? (Mark only one)
   ____College Prep ______ Honors

2) Do you have access to a computer at home? (Mark only one)
   ____Yes  ____No

3) Do you have access to the Internet at home? (Mark only one)
   ____Yes  ____No

4) How frequently do you usually use the Internet at home? (Mark only one)
   ____A few times a day
   ____Once a day
   ____About every other day
   ____A few times a week
   ____About once a week
   ____Less than once a week
   ____I don’t usually use the Internet at home

5) How frequently do you usually use the Internet at school? (Mark only one)
   ____A few times a day
   ____Once a day
   ____About every other day
   ____A few times a week
   ____About once a week
   ____Less than once a week
   ____I don’t usually use the Internet at school

6) Do you believe the Internet should be used in the classroom? (Mark only one)
   ____Yes  ____No  ____Don’t know

7) Do you usually accept everything you see or read on the Internet as being true and accurate? (Mark only one)
   ____Most of the time  ____Sometimes  ____Never
8) In this question, you are asked (a) to indicate how useful you think it is to use the Internet for each of the following and (b) how frequently do you use the Internet for each of the following? (Mark only one response in each category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Useful</td>
<td>Useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research for projects</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail in connection with class work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily homework assignments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class work (e.g., Do Nows or group work)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9) Please indicate the extent to which each of the following occurs? (Mark one response for each item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Much</th>
<th>Much</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to use the Internet to gather background information for school projects or class discussions.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am assigned to use the Internet/WWW for class work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to use email to communicate with my teacher and/or peers regarding school work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My classes have developed webpage(s) for school or for a specific class.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet has been used in lesson plans by my teachers.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers have taken me on virtual field trips.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following question in complete sentences.

10) How do you evaluate what you see on the Internet to determine its accuracy or truthfulness?

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix F
Searching for Search Tools Lesson plan
Main Points/Rationale
Students will search their 3rd MP project on the Internet by using three different types of search engines.

Objectives
1. After completing the handout, Searching the Internet, students will be able to navigate through web searches by evaluating the sites found for relevancy, using a set of defined criteria, to their 3rd MP project.
2. After completing this activity, students will have gathered several web sites to be used as sources for their research paper.

Standards
STANDARD 6.3 (WORLD HISTORY)
Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards
Standard 2: All students will use information, technology, and other tools.
Standard 3: All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

Prior Knowledge
• need know their topic area
• basic computer skills

Materials & Equipment
• computer lab
• Internet access (student must have signed acceptable use policies)
• Searching the Internet Handout

Warm-up/introduction - 5 minutes
• go to lab - assign computers
• hand out Searching the Internet
• read over examples on handout & instructions

Transition
• begin working on WS

Activity One - Searching for Search Tools - 20 minutes
• students will complete the handout “Searching the Internet”
• will be collected & graded as quiz

Transition
• let’s look at some web sites that are recommended by historians in your topic areas

Activity Two - Recommended Web Sites - 5-10 minutes
• while you are looking at the sites - take any notes you think might be useful
Transition

- wrap-up

Closing - 2-3 minutes

- finish up what you are doing
- make sure your name is on Searching the Internet - collect from students
- Monday - we’re going to continue w/Chapter 26
- if you began to work on your research paper - remember that you’ll be getting the web criteria next week - so just use print material for now
- HW - Timeline!

Additional Activities

- Web Evaluation lesson (see plan)

Assessment of Student Performance

- Searching the Internet Handout
- monitoring of students

Reflection

More examples are necessary to clarify the differences between search engines, directories, and metasearch engines. Students also need more direction as to what items to write on each line of the worksheet (see original and modified versions of accompanying worksheet.) It is better to provide instruction and hand out the worksheet before taking the students to the computer lab. Fortunately, most students had enough time to complete the worksheet, which may be due in part to the fact that they were already familiar with the computers in general and the Internet specifically. There were several students who voiced their dislike of the metasearch engine www.askjeeves.com. I told them to make note of that on their worksheets (one in particular refused to use that engine at all).

On a personal note, instructing in the computer lab is much more tiring than instructing in the regular classroom. I was very lucky to have had my cooperating teacher’s assistance for this lesson plan.

Sample Assessment

Class Discussion: Is everything we see on the Internet true and accurate? How do you think we can tell what is accurate and what is not?

References

Appendix G
Searching the Internet Worksheet
Searching the Internet

There are many ways to search for sources on the Internet. To use these search tools, you must discover what tools identifies the type of results that best serve your needs.

Search for your research paper using (1) two search engines, (2) one search directory, and (3) two metasearch engines. Record the data about each search. See examples.

Do not open the links to the web sites. Just use the information from the search tools to write down information about them.

Topic: Jack the Ripper
Date Searched: March 2, 2003
Search Engine: www.google.com
Findings: The casebook.org web site was listed twice in the top ten sites displayed.
Types of Sites: One site is an old ABC News story, one is an advertisement for a tour in London, while others appear to be unaffiliated sites.
Number of relevant sites: At least two appear to be useful, while there are several advertising the Broadway musical in the top twenty sites.
Directory Categories: none
Total number of sites found: about 180,000 sites found

Topic: Jack the Ripper
Date Searched: March 2, 2003
Search Engine: www.yahoo.com
Findings: First was listed the directories, then sponsor matches, and then the web matches. Casebook.org was first.
Types of Sites: There were sites that list factual information, possible motives, tour and musical information, as well as the ABC News story.
Number of relevant sites: This brought up some of the same sites, as well as other sites that state that they have photographs of the murder sites. There are a lot of sites that advertise books, movies, posters, CDs, etc.
Directory Categories: United Kingdom, Serial Killers, Jack the Ripper; United Kingdom, England, Greater London, Tour Operators, Jack the Ripper Tours
Total number of sites found: 161,000 sites found

Topic: ___________________________ Date Searched: ___________________________
Search Engine # 1: altavista.com

Findings: __________________________________________

Types of Sites: __________________________________________

Number of relevant sites: __________________________________________

Directory Categories: __________________________________________

Total number of sites found: __________________________________________
Search Engine # 2: www.google.com
Findings: 
Types of Sites: 
Number of relevant sites: 
Directory Categories: 
Total number of sites found: 

Search Directory: www.yahoo.com
Findings: 
Types of Sites: 
Number of relevant sites: 
Directory Categories: 
Total number of sites found: 

Metasearch Engine # 1: www.askjeeves.com
Findings: 
Types of Sites: 
Number of relevant sites: 
Directory Categories: 
Total number of sites found: 
Metasearch Engine # 2: www.metacrawler.com

Findings: ____________________________________________

Types of Sites: ________________________________________

Number of relevant sites: ________________________________

Directory Categories: ________________________________

Total number of sites found: ____________________________

Appendix H
How Can You Tell if That Website is Good?
How can you tell if that website is good?

When you search for information on the Internet, do you wonder if it is true or not? How do you decide which websites are good enough to use for school research, whether it is a homework assignment, test, extra credit project, or research project?

When you are searching on the Internet for school, you have to evaluate the sites you view to make sure they are ones you can trust. But how do you know whether or not you can trust a website? How can you tell if the site is accurate, objective, current, factual, reviewed by others, or covers the entire subject completely? Selecting the best from the Internet is often difficult. Since anyone can publish a web page, you must use your own judgment.

First ask: who made it? Anyone can make a web page. So how do you find out about the author of a website and what do you need to know about him or her?

When examining the authority or authorship of a website, ask yourself these key questions...

a) Is the author’s name explicitly stated?
b) Does the author provide his or her email address?
c) Does the author tell you from where the information originated?
d) Does the author support his or her view points with evidence or examples?
e) Is the author an authority on this topic? In other words, what credentials are listed for the author(s)?
f) Does the publisher list his or her qualifications? If so, what are they?
What type of webpage is it? What is the purpose of the site?

Examples:
Advocacy (to speak or write in support of): sponsored by an organization attempting to sway public opinion (.org)
Business/Marketing: sponsored by commercial enterprise - sell or promote product (.com)
Informational: purpose is to present factual information (.edu or .gov)
News: purpose is to provide extremely current information (.com)
Personal Home Page: published an individual who may or may not be affiliated with a larger organization (.com, .edu, etc.)

What is the viewpoint of the website? Does it show both sides of the story? Read the following example.

What is the viewpoint of this site?

What is the goal? Does it want to sell you a product?

Does it want to promote a certain way of thinking?

“Take the VEGPLEDGETM and for 60 days you'll be taking a tremendous step toward helping this planet heal, while improving your own health. You'll save precious water and fossil fuel, reduce air pollution, reduce your intake of saturated fat and cholesterol, and learn a new and exciting way of eating. It's fun and easier than you might think. And EarthSave will give you support to help you succeed!
Numerous studies demonstrate that by eating a diet centered on plant-based foods we can lose excess weight, feel more vigorous, and reduce our risk of many serious health problems, such as heart disease and cancer.
It's easier to make positive changes in your life when you make a commitment - and have a support system to back you up. Enter EarthSave's VEGPLEDGETM Join other enthusiastic and friendly people around the world in making a fresh start...”

Take the VEGPLEDGETM


When examining the objectivity of a website, ask yourself these key questions…

a) Are there pages linked that provide alternative views?
b) Are there indications of gender or racial bias?
c) What is the primary goal of this site?
d) What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author?
e) Are there any advertisements or web pop-ups?
Does the website provide all the necessary information? Read the example and decide if this is the whole story concerning Cinderella you remember from your childhood. After reading it, what is missing?

Cinderella’s evil stepmother always made her clean the house, wash the clothes, do the dishes, sweep the floors, and take care of her two stepsisters. One day when she was very depressed, Cinderella suddenly decided she should go to the Prince’s ball. She received a beautiful dress and a pumpkin was turned into a beautiful carriage to take her to the ball. The Prince danced and danced with her and they fell in love, but at the stroke of midnight her clothing returned to its prior sad, depressed state. She ran home. However, the Prince soon found where she lived and they lived happily ever after.

When examining the scope of a website, ask yourself these key questions...

a) How much information is given?
b) How broad is the topic area? How in-depth is the information?
c) Are all aspects of the subject covered?

When was the information last updated? Always look for a last updated date near the top or bottom of the website’s home page. If it hasn’t been updated in a while, do you think the information might have changed? Just because it is in the past doesn’t mean the history does not change. For example, what does this statement and the following ‘last updated’ note tell you about the website?

“A new look for our website! Look for exciting new developments online. Plimoth Plantation is currently redesigning it’s website www.plimoth.org. The new site will bring a bit of the 17th century into your home, highlighting current research and spectacular images of Hobhamock’s (Wampanoag) Homesite, Mayflower II, the 1627 Pilgrim Village, and more. It will be easier to use, with essential information at your fingertips. Kids will have a variety of fun educational activities to choose from, in the new Just for Kids section, complete with Homework Help essays to help them understand 17th-century history and culture. The new and improved www.plimoth.org is scheduled to launch in spring 2003.

Updated 10 December, 2002”


When examining the currency of a website, ask yourself these key questions...

a) When was it last updated? (Is this information even available?)
b) How up-to-date are the links (if any)? How many links do not exist anymore?
Do you understand it?
Read the following example and answer the following questions.

Who is this article about?

What did he write?

In what city did he live?

In what was he schooled?

In a glass by itself is the greatst work of medievel literature is Dante’s Komedy. Not much is none bout the life of Dante Alighieri, cept that was active during the part of his career in the politikal effairs of his naive city of Florenct. Despot his engagment in politiks, he manager to acquire an some mastery of religious, philanthropic, and literary noledge of time. he not only new the Bible and the Church fathers, but - most unusual for - he also absorned the most recent Scholastic theology.

Would you trust the author of a website if they presented the previous example as true and accurate? Do you think there are any words missing? Does the author use the words correctly?

Answer the following questions about this example.

How many spelling errors can you find?

Are there any words that you do not understand? What are they?

When examining the clarity or quality of writing of a website, ask yourself these key questions…
a) Is the text well written?
b) Is the central thesis or primary goal evident?
c) Is the text free of jargon, or do the terms go undefined?
d) Is the purpose of the website clearly listed on the home page?
e) Is the resource interesting to look at?
How did you find out about this website? Was it recommended or did it pop up in a web search? Look to see if it contains a bibliography or list of sources.

When examining the bibliography of a website or the recommendations that led you to the site, ask yourself these key questions...

a) Is a bibliography of print sources included?
b) Are sources of information stated?
c) Have people who you respect (friends, teachers, librarians, or parents, etc.) recommended this site as a good source of information?

Just because it is on the web doesn't mean that it is accurate or true. The following key questions help you to determine accuracy (state of being careful, exact, and free from errors) and validity (the quality of being valid or based upon evidence or fact).

When examining the accuracy or validity of a website, ask yourself these key questions...

a) Are you positive the information is true? If so, what can you do to prove that it is true?
b) What motivation does the author have for creating this webpage?
c) Can the author be contacted for clarification or to be informed of new information?
d) Does the author use an appropriate manner in which to cite or quote information?

adapted from:

Web Evaluation Activity Directions

You will be examining five websites, taking on roles as various specialists, in order to evaluate and rank the sites. When filling out your chart, refer to the questions within this packet to help you rank the sites according to the following characteristics: authority/authorship, objectivity, scope, currency, quality of writing, bibliography/recommendation, and accuracy/validity.

Write down notes on the evaluation chart to justify your ranking of the websites.
Appendix I
Web Evaluation Guide
Directions: Use this guide to evaluate the web site(s) you have chosen to assist you in researching your third marking period project. You must complete an evaluation for each web site you cite in your paper. To answer you may have to write out an answer on the line(s) provided or circle the appropriate answer. Complete this assignment thoroughly. It will be part of your third marking period project grade. If you have any questions, refer to your packet entitled, “How can you tell if that web site is good?” or see me if you are having any problems.

Title of Web Site ________________________________

Web Address ________________________________

First date visited _______________ Last date visited _______________

Authority/Authorship

Is the author’s name explicitly stated? YES – NO

What is it? ________________________________

Does the author provide his/her email address? YES – NO

If so, what is it? ________________________________

From where does the information come? ________________________________

Is there evidence to support the author’s viewpoint? YES – NO

If so, what is it? ________________________________

Is the author an authority on this topic? YES – NO In other words, what credentials are listed for the author(s)? Why is the author qualified to write about this subject?

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Objectivity

Are there pages linked that provide alternative views? YES – NO

If so, list the addresses

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Are there indications of gender or racial bias? YES – NO

What is the primary goal of this site? Why was this page written? ________________

________________________________________________________________________

What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author? ____________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Are there any advertisements or web pop-ups? YES – NO

Scope

How much information is given? _____________________________________________

How broad is the topic area? How in-depth is the information? ________________

________________________________________________________________________

Are all aspects of the subject covered? YES – NO

If not, what is missing? _____________________________________________________
Currency

When was it last updated? (Is this information even available?) _______________________

How up-to-date are the links (if any)?
View at least two of the links and check for when they were last updated.

Web address __________________________________________
Last updated _________________________________________
Web address __________________________________________
Last updated _________________________________________

Click on at least four links to see if they still exist. How many links do not exist anymore?
________________________________________

Clarity or quality of writing

Is the text well written? YES – NO
Is the central thesis or primary goal evident? YES – NO
Is the text free of jargon, or do the terms go undefined? YES – NO
Is the purpose of the web site clearly listed on the home page? YES – NO
Is the resource interesting to look at? YES – NO

Bibliography/Recommendations

Is a bibliography of print sources included? YES – NO
Are sources of information stated? YES – NO

Have people who you respect (friends, teachers, librarians, or parents, etc.) recommended this site as a good source of information? YES – NO

Who has recommended the site? ___________________________
Accuracy/Validity

Are you positive the information is true? YES – NO

If so, what can you do to prove that it is true? ____________________________

______________________________

What motivation does the author have for creating this web page? Why did the author create the site?

______________________________

Can the author be contacted for clarification or to be informed of new information?

YES – NO, How? ____________________________

______________________________

Does the author use an appropriate manner in which to cite or quote information?

YES – NO
Appendix J
Web Evaluation Lesson Plan
Main Points/Rationale
Students will research five different web sites in groups and rank them according to the provided chart.

Objectives
1. After completing the web evaluation activity, students will be able to navigate various web sites on related topics by evaluating the sites found using a set of defined criteria.
2. After completing this activity, students will be able to evaluate and analyze web sites in relation to their 3rd MP projects.

Standards
STANDARD 6.3 (WORLD HISTORY)
Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards
Standard 2: All students will use information, technology, and other tools.
Standard 3: All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

NETS (National Educational Technology Standards for Students)
2 - Social, ethical, and human issues (responsible use)
3 - Technology productivity tools
5 - Technology research tools
6 - Technology problem-solving and decision-making tools

Prior Knowledge - basic computer skills

Materials & Equipment
- computer lab
- Internet access (student must have signed acceptable use policies)
- How can you tell if that web site is good? handout; Web Evaluation Chart; Grading Rubric

Day One - Introduction to Web Evaluation
Warm-up/introduction - 2 minutes
- assign groups

Transition - handout worksheets - look at directions

Activity One - How can you tell if that web site is good? - 15-20 minutes
- read through as class

Transition - look at web evaluation chart

Activity Two - Web Evaluation Chart - 5 minutes
- explain how students will use this within their groups

Transition - wrap-up
Closing - 2-3 minutes
- tomorrow - going to computer lab to work on this project
- handout criteria for evaluating web sites - in case students want to begin to use the web for their research projects

Day Two - Web Evaluation
Warm-up/Introduction - 2-3 minutes - go to computer lab

Activity One - Web Evaluation - 20-25 minutes
- work on their charts (monitor for progress)
- each group will be evaluating the same set of five web sites
- small groups need to reach a consensus (agreement) for rankings

Transition - finish up rankings

Activity Two - Group Rankings - 5-10 minutes
- return to large group to rank as class - compare rankings

Additional Activities - none prepared - allow students to research their 3rd MP projects

Assessment of Student Performance
- Web Evaluation Charts
- Grading Rubric
- monitoring of students

Reflection
In order to make this lesson run more smoothly and be more effective, examples need to be provided ahead of time. These examples could come from websites used in their previous reports and projects. Both the packet and the directions should be read through in the classroom to minimize the distractions. It would also be beneficial to have longer than 40 minutes so that the students could complete everything necessary related to the actual web evaluation in one class session.

Students should be reminded that websites will change, even day to day, and even the search engines will change. This occurred between the teaching of this lesson to period 5 and then to periods 6 and 9 (one of the websites removed the topic from their menu).

I also found it necessary to have two teachers monitoring and assisting the students for this lesson plan. If a second teacher is not available, perhaps a classroom or media center aide.

Sample Assessment
Class Discussion: Is everything we see on the Internet true and accurate? How do you think we can tell what is accurate and what is not?

References
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Site #1</th>
<th>Site #2</th>
<th>Site #3</th>
<th>Site #4</th>
<th>Site #5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority/Authorship</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is responsible for the site?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why was this page written? Is the information biased?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all aspects of the subject covered?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency (Time)</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When was the site last updated?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Writing</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Clarity) Can you understand the site?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography - Recommendations</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the sources stated?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy/Validity</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the information true and reliable?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L
Student Evaluation Rubric
Web Evaluation Activity

Student __________________________________________

Evaluator: _______ Teacher _________ Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Evaluation/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student worked effectively in group to divide tasks and reach consensus.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student understood his/her role as evaluator and his/her focused</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective is clear in his/her organizer.</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer was completed with accurate and relevant information. Student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>displayed critical thought in examining the web sites.</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the group were involved in the discussion and defended</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their rankings of the web sites.</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluator: _______ Teacher _________ Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Evaluation/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student worked effectively in group to divide tasks and reach consensus.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student understood his/her role as evaluator and his/her focused</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective is clear in his/her organizer.</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer was completed with accurate and relevant information. Student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>displayed critical thought in examining the web sites.</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the group were involved in the discussion and defended</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their rankings of the web sites.</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix M
Third Marking Period Research Project Requirements
3rd Marking Period Project
CP World History

Your assignment this marking period is to write a 3-4 page paper with cites and a bibliography page on a topic chosen from those provided. The paper must have a proper opening, body, and closing with supporting details.

Topic Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origins of World War I</th>
<th>Trench Warfare (WWI)</th>
<th>Serbian Ultimatum ♦ must include telegram to Serbia and their response♦</th>
<th>The Willy-Nicky Telegrams ♦ must include @ least 1 telegram from each person ♦</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propaganda WWI ♦ must include @ least 1 example ♦</td>
<td>Propaganda WWII ♦ must include @ least 1 example ♦</td>
<td>Vladimir Lenin</td>
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<td>Leo Tolstoy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requirements

• paper must be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. Font.
• Cover page with your topic, your name, your class period, and the date (this cover page is not included in the 3-4 page requirement).
• topic must be approved - only 2 people per topic
• at least three sources (see additional regarding appropriate sources)
• MLA format for citation preferred

This is a research paper, so I expect to see evidence of research. You must use at least four sources, but you may use more. We will discuss selection of sources in more detail. Remember any idea that is not your own must be cited! Do not forget that the school policy for plagiarism is zero for the assignment, a phone call home, and a referral in your discipline file.

This paper is due March 27, 2003 (NO EXCEPTIONS). 10 points will be taken off your grade for each day late, even if you are absent. If you are out of school, send your paper in with someone. The only exception to this is a school-approved excused absence. This is a test grade, so do your best work.
If you would like me to proofread your paper, I will; however, I must have it at least two days before you intend to turn it in. Please see me with any questions.

Three sources: Only ONE may be from an encyclopedia (print form, CDROM, or Online); Only TWO may be from the Internet (those sites MUST be checked against the web evaluation criteria); the other sources needed may be from history books, journal articles, primary sources, or newspaper articles. You may NOT use your textbook. If you need help finding sources, please see me.

The paper should include these ideas within the body:
Why do we need to know about this particular person, battle, document, or event?
What is the role of this particular person, battle, document, or event?
What did this particular person, battle, document, event contribute to the era we are studying?

When we start researching in class, you will be provided with a paper that provides a starting point to help you locate sources for your paper.
3rd Marking Period Project
Honors World History

Your assignment this marking period is to write a 4-5 page paper with cites and a bibliography page on a topic chosen from those provided. The paper must have a proper opening, body, and closing with supporting details.

**Topic Selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origins of World War I</th>
<th>Trench Warfare (WWI)</th>
<th>Serbian Ultimatum ❖ must include telegram to Serbia and their response ❖</th>
<th>The Willy-Nicky Telegrams ❖ must include @ least 1 telegram from each person ❖</th>
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