

INTERNET-ONLY SOURCES (PODCAST 8 TRANSCRIPT)

Click link Podcast 8: Internet-Only Sources

<https://kuportal-a.akamaihd.net/ascmia/wc/podcasts/08internetonlysources.mp3>

Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another effective writing podcast. In this episode, I am going to discuss a matter many folks have to deal with when conducting research electronically—how to evaluate the resources one discovers via the Internet. In particular, I am going to focus on Internet-only sources.

When one conducts research nowadays, the Internet can be enormously helpful as it enables researchers to find content relatively quickly and most definitely comfortably. The big issue is whether or not the content one finds is good. As I am sure you all know, it's possible for anyone to post anything on the Internet, so you have to be especially careful when selecting what sources to use. Many times an assignment will stipulate how many, if any, Internet-only sources can be used in a paper.

So what is meant by Internet-only?

Practically speaking, Internet-only means content that exists **ONLY** on the Internet. The information does not have a print equivalent. This type of information comes from what might best be termed web sites.

Some web sites will contain credible information, but other sites will not, so one has to be vigilant in determining if content from an Internet-only source will be credible. There is an enormous difference between content found on an organizational web site like the Centers for Disease Control and your next door neighbor's personal web site on exotic pets. Of course, if your next door neighbor also happened to be a doctor of veterinary medicine with a specialty in exotic animals then the content would likely be credible, but the question then would be whether or not to use such content from that exact source. The issue of credibility will always surface when dealing with Internet-only sources, and when conducting academic research, one wants to find and use the best possible content.

Please understand that content found using an electronic database via a library is not Internet-only content. Even though you access the content using the Internet, such material is warehoused in a library in electronic form and a print equivalent basis. However, if you find a journal that is published only online (i.e., there is no print equivalent), then such a source would be considered Internet-only even if the journal is geared for a professional and/or academic audience.

Last, content found from the online version of a newspaper is not considered Internet-only.

I know some of you may be thinking that understanding what constitutes an Internet-only source is more difficult than you expected, so let me give you the skinny: An Internet-only source is content that exists **ONLY** on the Internet. Period. That's your litmus paper test.

Let's talk about the credibility of Internet-only sources. Whenever you use an Internet-only source for



an academic purpose, you want to make sure the source is credible. (This, of course, is true for all sources, not just Internet-only.) Internet-only sources will raise a red flag for many readers, but at the same time, more and more journals and professional newsletters are turning to an electronic-only format so there is plenty of credible Internet-only out there, but your responsibility is to make sure.

When you are contemplating using content from an Internet-only source, think about the following:

1. Is there an author for the content? What are that author's credentials? What are the author's professional affiliations? Is there a clear bias? You want to make sure, as best as possible, the author is an expert on the subject he/she is writing about. Sometimes you have to poke around the web site or look elsewhere for author information.
2. If the web site does not include an author, is the site from a professional organization? Is the professional organization respected? Is there a bias or agenda? Does the web site try to sell products or allow advertising? I am always suspect of someone trying to make a dime by either allowing advertisements or trying to sell something. There is nothing more annoying than trying to read what you thought was serious content with blinking boxes of Rice-a-Roni bouncing in the sidebar.
3. Does the web site have updated content, reliable contact information, and functioning links? Does it "look" professional? Is the web site more than a collection of links to content housed elsewhere? The web site itself needs to be deemed credible regardless of the actual content. If there is no publication or last updated information, the site may no longer be active.
4. When using Internet-only sources in an academic paper, the responsibility of making sure such sources are credible lies solely with the researcher. The job of the researcher—and this of course includes student researchers—is to find the best information from the best sources. While you may be tempted to take shortcuts, doing so only sullies the information presented and undermines your credibility. This is not to say do not use Internet-only sources. If you do use Internet-only sources make sure the content comes from a credible source.

Thanks so much for listening, everyone. Happy writing.

