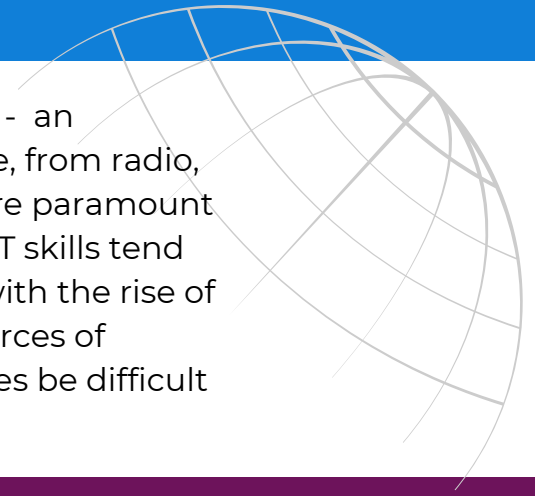# Doing research on the internet

Context

ICT skills (Information and Communication Technology - an umbrella term that includes any communication device, from radio, television, cell phones, computer, network and so on) are paramount in any online learning environment. Today, Students' ICT skills tend to be better developed than previous generation. But with the rise of the internet and the many different and conflicting sources of information available all over the world, it can sometimes be difficult to retrieve factual, credible sources.

Evaluating resources

Many learners today start their research on any topics by typing to term in the Google Search Bar and clicking on the first few links. This comes from misguided thinking that the higher up the search page, the more reliable and more suited a hit is to the search.

That's simply not true. Here's why:
1) Most search engines offer paid websites priority over others
2) The more hits a website gets, the higher up the search engine it appears, which has nothing to do with veracity and appropriateness.

This is why teaching critical computer skills is crucial.
The Berkeley Library created an easy guide to guide learners on 'what to do' when they encounter any kind of source. They should consider:

Authority - Who is the author? What is their point of view?

Purpose - Why was the source created? Who is the intended audience?

Publication & format - Where was it published? In what medium?

Relevance - How is it relevant to your research? What is its scope?

Date of publication - When was it written? Has it been updated?

Documentation - Did they cite their sources? Who did they cite?

How to conduct research online?

Choose and define your topic

Determine the fields of study

See what research has been done

Evaluate sources and information

Organise your information

Create a bibliography

Update your outline and complete your research!

Tips to search online

Doing online research, especially for presentation or papers, requires a certain process and structure to ensure that the information is accurate.
There are two major ways to research online: **by subject or by keywords.**

By keywords

Searching by keyword is simply entering your topic in a search engine. Use quotation mark for words that should be found together (ex: "electoral reform"). To narrow your search, use words such as: AND, OR, and NOT.

AND: will provide source with both terms (ex: election + reform).
OR: will provide sources with either or terms (ex: election OR reform).
NOT: will exclude a term (ex: "election NOT reform").

By subjects

Use an academic subject directory. These are sites organized by librarians or other academics providing a collection of links to sites that are appropriate for the subject.

Resources

Here are some additional websites to discover how to evaluate resources:

https://www.elearners.com/education-resources/online-learning/how-to-conduct-research-online/
https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/evaluating-resources
https://libraryguides.mta.ca/research_help/research_tips/academic_research