

Before You Surf the Net Think About...

- Realize the Internet is just another tool to access information; it does **NOT** replace other sources such as books, periodical indexes, encyclopedias, etc.
- The Net is the epitome of "free speech" and can be often a "virtual soapbox." Anyone can post something on the Net. There are no standards or quality control mechanisms; therefore, the quality and accuracy of sources vary tremendously.
- Remember you have to cite Internet resources used for your paper in a bibliography.
- Do **NOT** search the Internet as your *first* resource.
- Ask yourself these questions before you search the net:
 1. What types of sources are required for the assignment? Do you need books, a specialized encyclopedia, or journal articles? If so, the Net is probably not the best source to find these types of sources.
 2. What type of information do you need? Do you need statistics, facts, opinions, personal narratives, etc.?
 3. What sources have you already consulted?
 4. What sources besides the Internet are available on your topic? PLEASE ASK LIBRARY PERSONNEL for assistance in determining which sources may be the most appropriate.
 5. Will this information be available on the Net? Why do you think it will be?
 6. How are you going to find the information you are looking for on the Net?
 - a. Do you know the address of a particular web site on that topic?
 - b. Has someone already searched and verified "good" Net sources and book marked these?
 - c. Do you know how search engines (e.g., Yahoo) work, how material is indexed and how to effectively use search engines?
 7. How much time do you have to spend "surfing", or how much time and effort are you willing to invest in searching the Net? "Good" research on the Net is time consuming and requires effective planning, skilled knowledge of searching techniques and patience.
 7. How are you going to evaluate the information you find on the Net? See the attached handout for basic evaluation criteria. The following bibliography also lists several excellent sources for evaluating this "virtual" information.

