Recommended Web Sites and Content Guidelines

Library staff recommends web sites and web services to customers as part of our broader reference and referral service. These recommendations may be in person, over the phone, through electronic communication, or as part of the Library's web site, email, and social media communications. Topics and links included on the library's online platforms are chosen by library staff and will be reassessed on a continuing basis. Topics and links must meet some or all of the following criteria:

Access
Sites or content must:

- Be accessible from all current major web browsers and two older versions of major web browsers
- Be fully viewable or retrievable on computers on the library's wired or wireless networks (or noted otherwise)
- Load quickly and completely
- Be free of charge (or noted otherwise), though some services may require a valid library card to use
- Offer secure or encrypted access if registration is required or suggested for use

Authority
Sites or content must:

- Clearly identify responsibility for source or content
- Offer accurate information about status, affiliation, qualifications, or reputation of the author(s)
- Document source of content

Content

- Advertising, if any, is clearly delineated from content. Preference is given to sites with less advertising or affiliate relationships.
- Only accurate, factual, substantive information is included
- Content is suitable level for users of all ages (or noted otherwise)
- The subject's breadth, depth and time period are relevant to a broad range of our users
- Reference sites or content should encompass a broad range of information (authors) vs. a narrow topic (Jane Austen). Selection preference is given to information portals (MedlinePlus) vs. individual topics or organizations (American Cancer Society).
- Content is unique or not widely available

Currency
Sites or content:

- Are regularly maintained or updated
- Have been available long enough to be considered reliable
- Site gives some indication(s) of its history and maintenance

Design
Sites or content:

- Offers a user-friendly interface
- Are easy to navigate and are well-organized
- Offer clear instructions for use
- Are complete (not under construction or beta versions)
- Properly label and identify multimedia or affiliate links
- Are searchable
- Follow W3C Web Accessibility Guidelines

Popular/Local Information

- Selected sites or content that are frequently requested or local in nature will be included if they meet the criteria in this policy

Partnerships and Programs

Sites are also linked on the library's web sites, web services, or social media accounts in conjunction with any of the following: national or local events of interest to the community; programs or exhibits offered in and sponsored or co-sponsored by the library; and partnerships with city, state or federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, or corporate sponsors. These links or content are clearly identified in any library communication.

Links and content on the library's web sites, web services, or social media accounts are chosen by the library's web services staff or library staff who are familiar with library guidelines and expectations of use. The library reserves the right to include or exclude any and all links or content on its web sites, web services, or social media accounts or to change these links at any time. Unsolicited content suggestions will be considered only if they meet the criteria in this policy and are recommended by those who reside within the South Central Library System service area.

See also our Collection Development Policy at
http://www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/policies/collection-development