

Evaluating Support of Information Sources

Because anyone can publish anything on the World Wide Web, it is important that the author provide documentation to support the information, or that the user can find other sources to support the information.

Question to ask: does the document rely on other sources that are listed in a bibliography or include links to the documents themselves?

What to look for:

- Does the author provide a bibliography or cite references to confirm the accuracy of the information?
- Are references cited fully? Does the author follow a recognized style manual to cite references and quoted materials?
- Does the author display knowledge of theories, schools of thought, or techniques usually considered appropriate in the treatment of his or her subject?
- Has the document been subjected to a peer review process?
- Is the document a primary (original, unfiltered material) or secondary (modified, selected, or rearranged information about primary materials) source?
- Does the site refer to print and other non-Internet resources or just Internet resources?

Because anyone can publish anything on the World Wide Web at any time, it is important to be able to determine the timeliness of the information provided. Printed journals and books found in library collections always include publication and copyright information; information on a web site is oftentimes not dated in a similar manner.

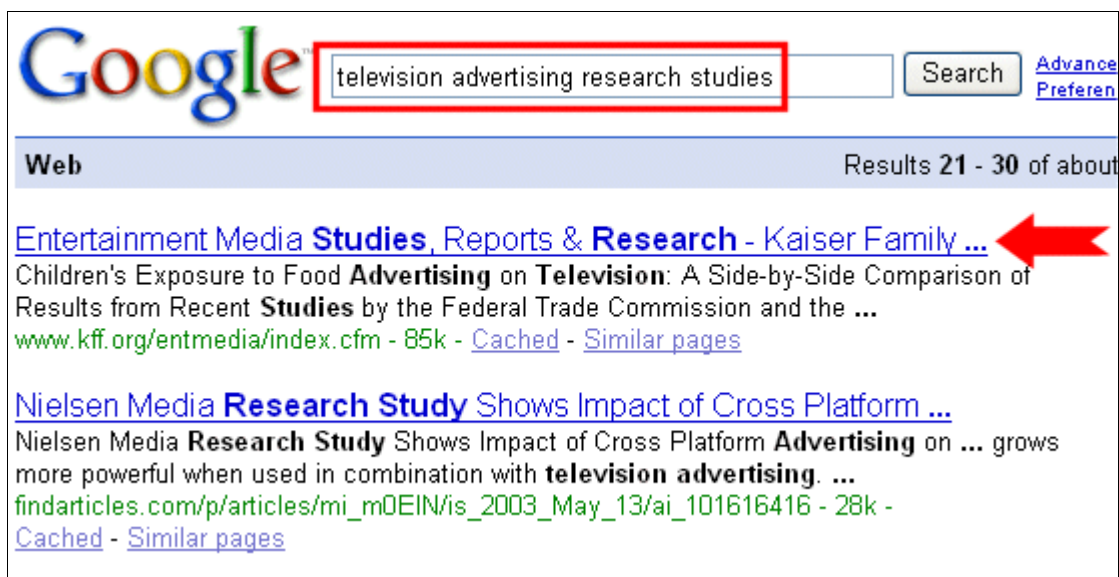
Questions to ask: Does the document include a publication date or a "last updated" date? Does the document include a date of copyright?

What to look for:

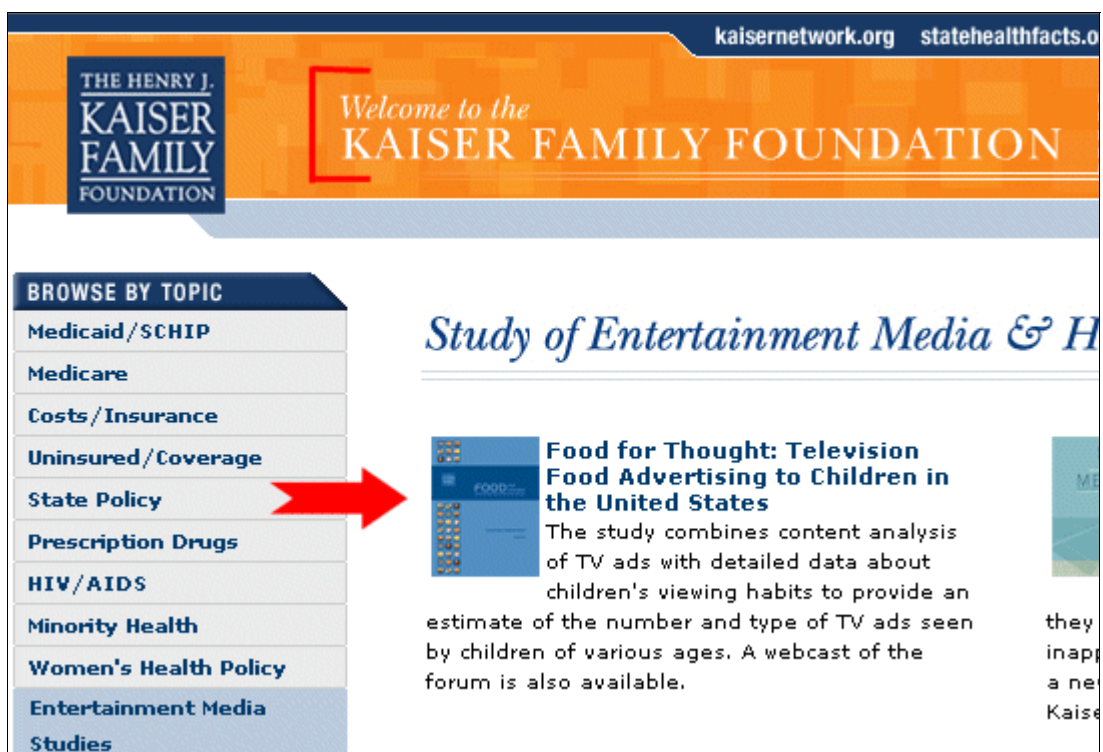
- Can the date found on the web site be verified?
- Is there internal confirmation of the information?
- Does it include information within the document such as "Based on 2000 US Census data"?

Evaluating Information Content: An Example of Reviewing for Content Support and Documentation

We wanted to do research on television ads. We started by using Google, and developed a search strategy with "advertising [and] television [and] research [and] studies" (in the red rectangle). The first two results from the search are displayed. We chose the first one (red arrow on the right side) because research was included in the document's title.



The URL took us to this page of the Kaiser Family Foundation (see red bracket at top of the image). The red arrow points to the document cited in the Google search.



However, we do not know anything at this time about the Kaiser Family Foundation. We find an “about us” link and follow that to this page:

About the Kaiser Family Foundation

Who We Are

A leader in health policy and communications, the Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private operating foundation focusing on the major health care issues facing the U.S., with a growing role in global health. Unlike grant-making foundations, Kaiser develops and runs its own research and communications programs, sometimes in partnership with other non-profit research organizations or major media companies.

We serve as a non-partisan source of facts, information, and analysis for policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the public. Our product is information, always provided free of charge – from the most sophisticated policy research, to basic facts and numbers, to information young people can use to improve their health or elderly people can use to understand their Medicare benefits.

The underlining points out that the non-profit foundation conducts its own research. We return to the previous image and click on the link for the study.

Welcome to the
KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION | www.kff.org

Home About Us News

New Study Finds That Food Is the Top Product Seen Advertised by Children

As the fight against childhood obesity escalates, the issue of food advertising to children has come under increasing scrutiny. Policymakers in Congress, the Federal Trade Commission and agencies such as the Institute of Medicine have called for changes in the advertising landscape, and U.S. food and media industries are developing their own voluntary initiatives related to advertising food to children. To help inform this debate, the Kaiser Family Foundation released the largest study ever conducted of TV food advertising to children.

The study, *Food for Thought: Television Food Advertising to Children in the United States*, combines content analysis of TV ads with detailed data about children's viewing habits to provide an estimate of the number and type of TV ads seen by children of various ages.

- [News Release](#)
- [Executive Summary](#)
- [Report](#) ←

The report was released at a forum in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, that featured U.S. Senator Sam Brownback, food industry leaders, health officials and consumer advocates.

- [Agenda \(.pdf\)](#)
- [Speaker Biographies \(.pdf\)](#) ←
- [Presentation \(.pdf\)](#)

The study provides the report in full text. As stated, the report was released as part of a forum. The speaker biographies are available. We clicked on that link, and discovered that forum participants included

- Walter Gantz, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Telecommunications
- Nancy R. Green, Ph.D., Vice President, Health and Wellness Policy and Nutrition Technology, PepsiCo
- Jackie Judd, Vice President and Senior Advisor for Communications, Kaiser Family Foundation
- Dale Kunkel, Ph.D., Professor of Communication, University of Arizona
- J. Michael McGinnis, M.D., M.P.P., Senior Scholar and Chair, Committee on Food Marketing and the Diets of Children and Youth, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences
- C. Lee Peeler, J.D., President and CEO, National Advertising Review Council, Executive Vice President, National Advertising Self-Regulation, Council of Better Business Bureaus
- Margo Wootan, D.Sc., Director, Nutrition Policy, Center for Science in the Public Interest

all of whom could be verified by agency/organization and literature searches.

The sponsoring program is identified as the Program for the Study of Entertainment and Health. Information available from the Web site states:

The screenshot shows the top portion of a website. The header is orange with the text "Welcome to the KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION" and the URL "www.kff.org". Below the header is a navigation bar with "Home", "About Us", and "Newsr". The main content area has a blue heading "Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health". The text below describes the foundation's research focus on the relationship between entertainment media and health, with a special focus on children and media. It lists major research projects such as how teens use the Internet for health information, time spent watching TV, playing video games, using computers, and reading; sexual messages on television; how health policy issues are portrayed on TV's medical dramas; what viewers learn from health information in entertainment shows; the role of media in childhood obesity; and the impact of media-based public health campaigns. The foundation also studies public policies on related media topics, including public service advertising on television, TV ratings, the V-Chip, and the impact of Internet filtering. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a link: "Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health Publications".

We conclude that this is a research study that indeed could be used for an academic research report.