

MDK12 Digital Library Criteria for Online Databases and Digital Content

Database Name:

1 is low. 3 is high. N/A = Not every criteria applies to all products.

I. Appropriateness		1	2	3	N/A
1	Is it appropriate for intended audience(s), e.g., age, maturity, and intellectual levels)?				
2	Does it effectively support targeted standards, curriculum, and/or learning outcomes?				
3	Is it presented in a manner to stimulate interest and curiosity?				
4	Is it presented to enhance readability for intended audience? Items to consider are the sentence length and structure, paragraphs with topic and clear purpose, vocabulary, and text meaning enhanced with illustrations, graphics, and multimedia.				
5	Does the format/layout enhance readability and legibility? Items to consider are font style and size, line spacing, foreground and background colors, headings and subheadings, adequate "white space" around text.				
6	Does the publisher make known the readability scale for the work as a whole or its parts? If so, which one was used and is there an interpretation given?				
II. Scope					
1	Is it of sufficient scope to effectively cover the subject(s) or intended purpose of the database?				
2	Does the use of links enhance the scope of the resource?				
3	Does it include online educator and student resources and tools?				
4	Does it duplicate other available resources? If so, is there a benefit in terms of value to cost ratio?				
5	Does it include a dictionary and/or thesaurus that are linked to content?				
6	Do they provide citation information in MLA and/or APA format?				
7	Is there a blogging component?				
8	Is there a wiki component?				

Comments on I and II:

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III. Accuracy		1	2	3	N/A
1	Is the information authoritative? Items to consider: Are the author(s) or editor(s) acknowledged experts in the subject? Is it distributed/aggregated by a reputable publisher? Does the publisher make known what information sources the database is based on?				
2	Is it accurate, reliable, and free of bias and stereotyping?				
3	What is frequency for updating either current or archival databases?				
4	Do the links within the content take the reader to relevant, reliable, and appropriate information? Items to consider are: Do they enhance meaning of the text? Are links missing that should be included?				
5	How often are links checked and updated?				
6	Is it free of grammatical and mechanical errors?				

Comments on III:

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IV. Accessibility		1	2	3	N/A
1	Is remote access included in the license agreement or limited to in-school use?				
2	Does the home screen load quickly?				
3	Does the user get an immediate sense of “orientation” to the essential parts of the home screen, e.g., contents, search box, navigation aids, main body of text, how to use/help features?				
4	Is there a text to speech feature? Items to consider: Is this feature easy to find? Is this feature easy to use – e.g., one click to activate?				
5	If there is a text to speech feature, the voice reader understandable and as close to a real voice as technology permits?				
6	Does it conform to Web Accessibility provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act? Is the information accessible to those using non-graphical browsers or text reading software?				
7	Is the content available in other languages?				
8	Is the translator software used accurate?				
9	Is there a text to speech feature for languages other than English?				
10	Can it be viewed effectively on different browsers on various platforms?				
V. Design and Presentation					
1	Is it user friendly? Is its organization as simple as it can be to serve the intended purpose and audience?				
2	Does it adhere to effective design principles, e.g., color scheme, textures, legible fonts, white space, contrast between background and text, descriptive titles and subtitles, navigation aids?				
3	Are the screen displays concise and uncluttered?				
4	Do the graphics and multimedia contribute to understanding the text? Do they avoid distracting the reader with flashing images and text “noise” and advertisements?				
VI. Navigation					
1	Does it include navigational aids such as icons, buttons, pull-down menus, bars, directional symbols, contents menu, help, site index?				
2	Are the navigational aids intuitive and effective in order to move the user easily around the resource and foster independent use?				
3	Do the links work?				
4	Is the number of links reasonable in order to direct the user quickly to the needed information? More than 3 clicks are too many!				
5	Are labels, captions, headings, subheadings and other text features used to enhance understanding of images, graphics, or blocks of text?				

Comments on IV, V and VI:

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VII. Search Input		1	2	3	N/A
1	What search method can be used (Boolean or natural language processing)?				
2	Can the user search by keyword, subject, title, phrase and will it search through the entire text, i.e., the whole article, titles and abstracts?				
3	Can the user apply useful limits such as year(s) or document type?				
4	Can the search be revised? Can the search forms be easily cleared?				
5	Can search terms be truncated?				
6	Does the user have access to an "advanced search" option?				
7	Will spelling errors limit search results? Will the user be prompted about the misspelling? Is the search engine intuitive enough to search for word anyway?				
8	Can you select or deselect media type? (i.e., just choose magazines or newspapers or video, etc. as applicable)				
VIII. Search Output					
1	Are search results ranked (high to low relevance)?				
2	Can the user limit the number of results desired?				
3	Are the search results displayed in an easily readable format?				
4	Can search results be combined?				
5	Can search results be sorted?				
6	Can the search results include abstracts and full text as applicable?				
7	Can search results be saved or marked for later retrieval?				
8	Are search words or concepts highlighted within the text of the search results?				
9	Do search results allow the option to "go to the best part."				
10	Can search results be emailed?				
11	Can the search results be bookmarked?				
12	Can the search results be downloaded?				
13	Can the search results be shared on social networking sites?				
14	What print options available, e.g., print selected text, entire document, print-friendly format, download and print later?				
15	Can the search strategy be saved as an "alert" sent as an email prompt to the searcher, e.g., when new content is added, the searcher is alerted.				
16	Can the search strategy be saved as an RSS in order to add to iGoogle, etc.?				

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IX. Administrative Considerations		1	2	3	N/A
1	Is the purpose and intent of the site published?				
2	Are there published reviews from authoritative sources?				
3	Is there a privacy policy statement?				
4	Are copyright policies explained?				
5	Is technical support easily accessed, e.g., email, telephone, help files?				
6	Is there are published selection policy available?				
7	Does the vendor offer access choices such as IP authentication, user ID and password, mobile phone application?				
8	Are user statistics available from the vendor/publisher?				
9	Does the vendor/publisher provide ample information regarding pricing schedules, special group pricing, or any state consortium agreements in order to make an informed and cost-effective purchasing decision?				
10	Is a schedule of upgrades provided?				
11	Does the vendor/publisher provide free staff development either face to face, webinar or through its website ?				

Comments on IX:

Developed by Della Curtis, Coordinator, Office of Library Information Services and Adjunct Faculty member at Towson University, Towson, Maryland. Thanks to the *Advanced Reference* class at Towson University for their help with developing the criteria. Edited by mdk12 Digital Library steering committee September 2010.