

Parallel Sessions A
A1 – Experiences in Web Site Evaluation

Thursday, September 19, Room B, 11.00

BIOME: Evaluating Internet Resources in Medicine and Health

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The BIOME Internet Service provides a freely accessible gateway to quality filtered Internet resources in the health and life sciences. The Service is funded within the UK academic sector, operating as a subject service of the Resource Discovery Network (RDN) (<http://www.rdn.ac.uk/>). It comprises of five gateways, each relating to specific sections of the health and life sciences. These include Vetgate, covering animal health and OMNI covering human health and medicine.

The aim of BIOME is to provide access to high quality Internet resources. Each resource in the collection has been hand selected and evaluated according to the BIOME Evaluation Guidelines (<http://biome.ac.uk/guidelines/eval/>). These specify three key factors to consider when examining an Internet resource: context, content and format.

Although subject gateways such as BIOME are unlikely ever to be as large as generic automated search engines, the human process of selection and the inclusion of a helpful description for each resource mean they play a vital role in helping users find quality, relevant resources quickly. Within the health and medicine subject field this role is particularly vital for helping people to navigate the sheer quantity and varying quality of resources on the web.

The BIOME guidelines continue to be reviewed and updated. BIOME has recently begun developing new additional guidelines to evaluate Internet-based information about alternative therapies. This is in recognition of the increased number of higher education courses for complementary and alternative therapies and the increasing volume of research into the effectiveness of alternative therapeutic interventions. The draft evaluation guidelines are available at: <http://biome.ac.uk/guidelines/eval/cam.html>.

The Service also seeks to collaborate with others in the field of Internet resource evaluation. BIOME recently participated in a European Commission workshop to draft guidelines on quality criteria for health related web sites that could be used to guide the Member States in possible implementation measures. The draft 'Guidelines for Quality Criteria' are available (until November 2001) at: http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/ehealth/quality/draft_guidelines/index_en.htm