DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Types of URLs

Quick guide to analyzing websites by their addresses

A website's address (i.e., it's Uniform Resource Locator, or URL) gives you clues about the site's purpose and the type of information it contains. Some governmental and academic websites have URLs which are easy to identify, as do some commercial and not-for-profit organizations. A website address can't critically explain what kind of information is on the site, but it can help you evaluate sites and organize your online research.

Government and non-governmental websites have a variety of URL suffixes depending on the nation or jurisdiction:

- **.gc.ca** - represents Canadian government websites
- **.gov.ns.ca** - represents Nova Scotian websites; most Canadian provinces follow this convention
- **.gouv.qc.ca** - represents websites from Quebec, and gnb.ca represents New Brunswick government websites; these provinces use different name conventions to account for linguistic differences.
- **.gov** - represents American government websites. Most American states follow a "ny.gov" convention.
- **.eu** - represents the European Union
- **un.org** - represents the United Nations

Academic institutions often use "**.edu**" or "**.ac**" in their web addresses. However, this convention is not universal and is not used in Canada.

- **.edu** – often represents American universities, colleges, and secondary schools
- **.ac.uk** – represents academic websites in the United Kingdom, *e.g., london.ac.uk or oxon.ac.uk*
- **Canadian Universities** often use a "u" in their web addresses, *e.g., utoronto.ca.* Many schools do not, though, *e.g., dal.ca, mcgill.ca, stfx.ca*

Not-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations often use the *.org* suffix. For example:

- **nato.org** – represents the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- **msf.org** – represents Médecins Sans Frontières
- **ilo.org** – represents the International Labour Organization
- **oecd.org** – represents the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Commercial and non-commercial websites use *.com*. This address can be difficult to analyze since many different kinds of organizations. Be aware of a site's purpose and objectivity when analyzing *.com* websites. For example:

- **gm.com** – represents General Motors, Inc
- **ford.com** - represents Ford Motor Company
- **globeandmail.com** – represents The Globe and Mail online, a major Canadian newspaper
- **ebscohost.com** – represents a major scholarly database company