Preface

But I read it on the Internet—it must be true!

The Internet is the most powerful, convenient, and potentially manipulative medium ever invented. It can give you any version of the truth you are looking for. Not only does information expand and change every day, the rules for finding information also change.

For many students, the Web is the dominant medium and the place they most likely go to find information. Unfortunately, many students accept information that looks authentic as the "truth" and this is one of the dangers of researching on the Web—especially since anyone can publish almost anything they want.

The ability to think critically about Web information is an essential skill for teachers and students. Web literacy goes beyond reading the content of a Web page (which is still an important step!). It also means becoming knowledgeable in the grammar of the Internet:

- Knowing how to read a URL
- Finding out who published a Web site
- Looking to see who is linked to a site

Being Web literate means you understand how search engines work and how information is controlled. It also means you have the skills to perform powerful searches that can potentially save time and frustration.

The purpose of this guidebook is to help teachers and students learn more about Web literacy and develop critical-thinking skills. It is a practical resource full of exercises, tips, handouts, and stories drawn from educators around the country. There is a wide variety of activities to use in the classroom or try on your own. You will be introduced to a multitude of skill sets and helpful resources.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

This book begins by explaining the basics of the Internet, setting the stage by introducing scaffolds and terminology critical to developing Web literacy skills. As chapters progress, so does the complexity of information. Depending on your level of comfort with the Web, you may wish to skip over various sections.

Chapter 1—Web Basics for Critical Thinking

- The Essentials
- Exploring the Grammar of the Internet

Chapter 2—The Empowered Researcher

- How Do Search Engines Work?
- Who Controls Information on the Internet?

Chapter 3—Get REAL: How to Validate Information on the Web

- Read the URL
- Examine the Content
- Ask About the Author and Owner

Chapter 4—Look at the Links

- Forward Links and Back Links

Chapter 5—Research Outside the Box: A Guide to Smart Searching

- Search With Extensions
- Creating a Virtual Index
- Finding Resources in Teacher Web Sites
- Calling All Colleagues

Chapter 6—Expanding the Boundaries: Blogs, RSS, Podcasts, and Wikis

- Blogs
- RSS
- Podcasts
- Wikis

**Chapter 7—Strategies and Evaluation:
Putting It All Together**

- Get REAL
- REAL Resources

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed to provide hands-on activities that allow you to prac-tice and explore new concepts as they are introduced. Some of these activ-ities may be used with students—some are designed for you to try on your own. Look for these headings for clarification:

Try This—Under this heading you will find activities for teachers to do on their own or preview first before using in the classroom. Activities in these sections often focus on professional development issues, such as how to find teacher resources in specific Web sites or from other teachers around the world. They may contain examples that may not be appropri-ate for all ages of student audiences.

Student Review—This heading refers to information that is recommended to review with students prior to beginning a For Students activity. Student Reviews outline important questions or considerations central to the Web literacy concept being introduced.

For Students—This refers to activities to try in the classroom. Often there are sites provided for you, or in some instances you are encouraged to find your own, related to your particular subject area. Any worksheets used in a For Students activity will be found at the end of each chapter.

Assessment—At the end of each chapter, you will find a formative assessment to use with your students. These multiple choice questions review the skills and terminology introduced in each chapter. An answer key is included.

Questions for Further Thought and Discussion—These questions are to be used as you think more deeply about the content presented in this book. The questions are designed to spur discussion among your peers.

I hope you find this guide to be a practical and worthwhile investment of your valuable time.