

# How to Evaluate Sources

| Criteria  | Books  | Journal/Magazine Articles (Periodicals)   | Websites   |
|---|--|---|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally reviewed by publishers and/or editors for facts and quality of content prior to publication</li> <li>• Various types of publishers: commercial, government, professional, university, vanity (self-publishing)</li> <li>• Reputation of the publisher may also help to determine a source's reliability or authority</li> <li>• Resources available to evaluate authors and publishers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar review process as books</li> <li>• Various types of periodicals: popular, scholarly and trade</li> <li>• Popular interest magazines usually have staff writers</li> <li>• Scholarly journals are usually written by experts in the subject and have a stringent review process that can include: review of publication to ensure reliability, authority, and general acceptance within the field of study prior to publication</li> <li>• Reputation of the periodical's publisher may also help to determine a source's reliability or authority</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anyone can publish a website</li> <li>• No standards regarding web design or content</li> <li>• No review for facts or quality of content</li> <li>• Website or Web delivered content (i.e. ProQuest – delivered content) You need to know the difference</li> <li>• Many websites are designed for commercial purposes!</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Purpose/ Audience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why was the book, article, website created or written? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Persuade the reader to do something?</li> <li>○ Entertain?</li> <li>○ Inform?</li> <li>○ Teach you how to do something?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who is this written for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General readers</li> <li>○ Students (high school, college, grad school)</li> <li>○ Researchers</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author affiliations - read the preface and introduction</li> <li>• Personal web page</li> <li>• <i>Who's Who</i></li> <li>• <i>Contemporary Authors</i></li> <li>• <i>Biography Index</i></li> <li>• Intended audience -- read the content, preface, and introduction</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author affiliations – If given</li> <li>• Personal web page</li> <li>• <i>Who's Who</i></li> <li>• <i>Contemporary Authors</i></li> <li>• <i>Biography Index</i></li> <li>• Intended audience – look at the content; publication may indicate the audience</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose – determined by examining the content and looking for mission statement and/or “about us” section</li> <li>• Intended audience – determined by examining the body of the website</li> </ul>   |

| Criteria   | Books   | Journal/Magazine Articles (Periodicals)  | Websites  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Authority/Credibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the author?</li> <li>• What are their qualifications?</li> <li>• What credentials? Education? Experience?</li> <li>• Are they affiliated with a larger institution?</li> <li>• Who published the book, article, or website?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author affiliations - Read the Preface &amp; Introduction</li> <li>• Personal web page</li> <li>• <i>Who's Who</i></li> <li>• <i>Contemporary Authors</i></li> <li>• <i>Biography Index</i></li> <li>• <i>Magazines for Libraries</i></li> <li>• <i>Writer's Market</i></li> <li>• <i>Literary Marketplace</i></li> <li>• Publisher - usually located on title page</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author affiliations – If given</li> <li>• Personal web page</li> <li>• <i>Who's Who</i></li> <li>• <i>Contemporary Authors</i></li> <li>• <i>Biography Index</i></li> <li>• <i>Magazines for Libraries</i></li> <li>• <i>Writer's Market</i></li> <li>• <i>Literary Marketplace</i></li> <li>• Publisher - usually located on contents page of issue</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact information provided - e-mail, address and phone number – usually in the footer.</li> <li>• Know the distinction between author and Webmaster</li> <li>• Author can be a corporation or an institution</li> <li>• Link to local home page – usually located in either header or footer</li> <li>• Domains: .com, .edu, .gov, .net, .org</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Accuracy/Reliability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the facts accurate?</li> <li>• How does this information compare to other sources you have found?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources cited in bibliography</li> <li>• <i>Book Review Index</i></li> <li>• <i>Book Review Digest</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources cited in bibliography</li> <li>• Other articles cite the article: see <i>Google Scholar</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources cited in bibliography – if available</li> <li>• Links connected to the site</li> <li>• Corporate or institutional website</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Currency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date of Publication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Up-to-Date</li> <li>○ Out-of-Date</li> <li>○ Timeless</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date - located on the title page</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date - usually located on cover and/or contents page</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the links current or updated regularly? Are there dead links?</li> <li>• Is the information on the page outdated?</li> <li>• Date of creation or revision – usually located in footer- if given</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Bias/Objective</b><br/>Bias isn't necessarily bad, but it is something you should be aware of.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the bias?</li> <li>• Does the author have a conflict of interest?</li> <li>• Are facts left out?</li> <li>• Are all sides of the issue presented?</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the Preface &amp; Introduction</li> <li>• <i>Writer's Market</i></li> <li>• <i>Literary Marketplace</i></li> <li>• Corporate or institutional website</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Magazines for Libraries</i></li> <li>• <i>Writer's Market</i></li> <li>• <i>Literary Marketplace</i></li> <li>• Corporate or institutional website</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links connected to the site – <i>Google</i> link search</li> <li>• Determined by examining the body of the website</li> <li>• Corporate or institutional website</li> </ul>  |