



## CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SOURCES

### EVALUATING WEB PAGES \*

EVALUATION CRITERIA	HOW TO INTERPRET	WHERE TO LOOK?
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where did this information come from?</li> <li>• What qualifications does the author or organization have to write on this topic?</li> <li>• Does the author have a university degree in the discipline? Or are they an amateur or someone with an interest in the topic?</li> <li>• If an organization is responsible for the pages, is the organization widely recognized as a source of scholarly and reliable information? (For example, the American Cancer Society for information on cancer-related topics)</li> <li>• What other information can you find about the author or organization responsible for the content of this web page?</li> <li>• If the information is copyrighted, is the name of the copyright holder given?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the source academic or commercial?</li> <li>• What credentials are listed for the author(s)?</li> <li>• Where is the document published? Check the URL domain.</li> <li>• Domains               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ .com                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business web page</li> <li>• News web page</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ .org or .net                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ .edu or .gov                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informational</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ .com or .edu and a tilde (~)                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal home page</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look near the top and the bottom of the web page.</li> <li>• Check the title, the section headings and the opening paragraphs to see if some person or organization is named as the person(s) responsible for the content of the web pages. Also look near the bottom of the page for this information.</li> <li>• You can sometimes learn something about the source of a web page by examining the page's URL. The URL often indicates what type of organization and what country a web page comes from.</li> <li>• Is there a link to more information about the person or organization?</li> <li>• For a single person/author, there might be information about the person's educational background or his/her research or other qualifications for speaking on this topic. There might be a link to his/her faculty or professional web</li> </ul>

## Evaluating Web Pages

		<p>pages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for an address or a phone number by which you could contact the author(s) if you wanted to.</li> <li>• If you can not find any information about the author(s) anywhere on their web pages, try searching for the person or organization's name using one of the Internet search engines to see if you can find web pages <i>about</i> them elsewhere.</li> <li>• If you can find no information at all about the web page's author(s), be very wary. If you can't verify that the information is authoritative, don't use it in a class paper or project.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accuracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the author use citations, references, or a bibliography to verify his / her information?</li> <li>• Is the information free of spelling and grammatical errors?</li> <li>• Is any statistical data clearly labeled and easy to read?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accuracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure author provides e-mail or a contact address/phone number.</li> <li>• Know the distinction between author and Webmaster</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accuracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for citations, references, or a bibliography.</li> <li>• If there is no indication where the information came from, be wary. Further research is recommended.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Objectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the author's purpose for writing this document?</li> <li>• How detailed is the information?</li> <li>• What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author?</li> <li>• Are there statements or attempts to persuade the reader without supporting factual information being cited?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Objectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the author have an agenda or bias that may affect the information they publish?</li> <li>• What is the mission of the author?</li> <li>• Determine if page is a mask for advertising; if so information might be biased.</li> <li>• View any Web page as you would an infomercial on television. Ask yourself why was this written and for whom?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Objectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the page use inflammatory language, images or graphic styles (for example, huge red letters or lots of boldface type) to try and persuade you of the author's point of view?</li> <li>• Examine the URL to see where the web page comes from. Is it a commercial site (.com)? A non-profit organization (.org)? An educational institution (.edu)?</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are any political, ideological, or institutional biases present in the document?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For organizations, there's often a link called "About Us" or something similar which leads to a page explaining what the organization's mission is, when and how it was founded, etc. Read it for clues.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Currency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When was the page written/produced?</li> <li>• When was the page updated?</li> <li>• How up-to-date are the links (if any)?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Currency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many dead links are on the page?</li> <li>• Are the links current or updated regularly?</li> <li>• Is the information on the page outdated?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Currency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look near the top and the bottom of the page to see if any publication date, copyright date or "date last modified" is indicated.</li> <li>• Look for other indications that the page is kept current. Is there a "What's New" section?</li> <li>• If statistical data or charts are included, be especially careful to notice what dates are represented there and when the data was collected or published.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Coverage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you viewing an entire text or a selection from a fuller document?</li> <li>• If what you are viewing is a selection from another document, is there a reference or a link to the original document in case you want more detail?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Coverage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all the important pieces of the subject covered or have significant pieces been left out?</li> <li>• Does the source provide enough detail to answer the research question?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Coverage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look near the beginning and the end of the document you're viewing to see if a citation is given to a fuller document.</li> <li>• Check the links within the text of the document itself to see if any lead you to a more complete version of the document.</li> <li>• Look for a table of contents to get an idea of the coverage of a source.</li> </ul>

\* Much of the information above comes from Widener University, Wolfgram Memorial Library, Santa Rosa Junior College Library, and C&RL News, July/August 1998.

## EVALUATING BOOKS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES \*\*

EVALUATION CRITERIA	HOW TO INTERPRET
<b>Authority</b>	<b>Authority</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the author?</li> <li>• What qualifications does the author have to write on this topic?</li> <li>• Does the author have a university degree in the discipline? Or are they an amateur or someone with an interest in the topic?</li> <li>• What is the author affiliation? Is it with an organization or an educational institution?</li> <li>• Who is the intended audience?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What credentials are listed for the author?</li> <li>• Does the author have an academic or business affiliation?</li> <li>• Who published the material? Is it a university press, academic institution or scholarly organization? Is it a commercial or trade publisher? Or is it self-published?</li> <li>• Is the material written for students, professionals, researchers, or general readers?</li> </ul>
<b>Accuracy</b>	<b>Accuracy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the author use citations, references, or a bibliography to verify his / her information?</li> <li>• Is the information free of spelling and grammatical errors?</li> <li>• Is it clear who has the ultimate responsibility for the content?</li> <li>• Is any statistical data clearly labeled and easy to read?</li> <li>• Are charts, graphs, maps, etc. used to illustrate concepts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the sources for any factual information clearly listed so they can be verified in another source?</li> <li>• Is the journal peer-reviewed/refereed (reviewed by other experts in the same field before it is accepted for publication)?</li> <li>• If material contains illustrations, are they clear and professional-looking?</li> </ul>
<b>Objectivity</b>	<b>Objectivity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the author's purpose for writing this material?</li> <li>• How detailed is the information?</li> <li>• What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author?</li> <li>• Are there statements or attempts to persuade the reader without supporting factual information being cited?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the author have an agenda or bias that may affect the information they publish?</li> <li>• Is the author trying to persuade, inform or prove something?</li> <li>• Are any political, ideological, or institutional biases present in the document?</li> </ul>
<b>Currency/Timeliness</b>	<b>Currency/Timeliness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the date of publication?</li> <li>• Is the information still correct or is it outdated?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you need current or historical information?</li> <li>• Does your topic value older material as well as current?</li> </ul>

## Evaluating Books and Journal Articles

### Coverage

- Is the topic covered comprehensively, partially or is it an overview?
- Is the material organized and focused?
- Is this original research, a review of previous research, or an informative piece?

### Coverage

- Are all the important pieces of the subject covered or have significant pieces been left out?
- Does the material provide enough detail to answer the research question?
- Is the argument or presentation understandable?

\*\* Much of the above information comes from the Colorado State University Libraries and the University of Connecticut Libraries.

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