



Criteria for Evaluating Information Resources

Audience

- **Scholarly vs. Popular Sources**

| | <u>Scholarly</u> | <u>Popular</u> |
|-----------------|--|--|
| <u>Purpose</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report the results of research ▪ Discuss ongoing research in detail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entertain or report on current event ▪ Summarize research that may be of interest to the general public |
| <u>Authors</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholars, always named, and often identified by the institution at which they work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Journalists are often unnamed |
| <u>Audience</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholars and researchers within a specific discipline or field of study. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The general public |
| <u>Language</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highly specialized and/or technical, and often includes professional jargon not easily understood by the general public. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General – it can be understood by anyone. |
| <u>Sources</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Always include footnotes and/or an extensive list of sources (bibliography). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typically do not include any footnotes or any list of sources. |

Scholarly vs popular sources Retrieved 8/17/2011, 2011, from <http://www2.lib.udel.edu/usered/howto/schvspop.htm>

Accuracy

- Is the information based on sound medical research? Can the information be verified by another source?
- Are the sources cited reliable?
- Are there grammatical and spelling errors?
- Are there footnotes, bibliographies, or references so that you can verify the information? Are these reliable?

Authority

- Who published the page (organization)? What are the person’s credentials? What do you know about them?
- Is the person backed by a known organization?
- Is the person affiliated with a university (*student or a faculty member?*)
- Can you easily find contact information on the web page or for the organization who has published the work?
 - Check the “about us” link, usually found at the beginning or the end of a webpage
- If it is a website, what is the domain name? (.edu, .gov, .com) Is it a personal page or supported by an organization?



Criteria for Evaluating Information Resources

- **Primary vs. Secondary Sources**

| | Definition | Examples |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Primary Source | First-hand information from a person who witnessed or participated in an event. It may also be scientific data, statistics, or an official transcript of a government proceeding | lab reports, interviews, letters, minutes, Interviews, oral histories, personal narratives , autobiographies |
| Secondary Source | Description by a person usually not present at the event and relying on primary source documents for information. Sources usually analyze and interpret. | Textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias |

CBB library and information services Retrieved 8/17/2011, 2011, from <http://www.cbbnet.org/teaching/sources.html>

Primary vs secondary sources Retrieved 8/17/2011, 2011, from <http://www.princeton.edu.proxy.library.vcu.edu/~refdesk/primary2.html>

Bias/Objectivity

- Is the information showing just one point of view?
- What kind of institution sponsored the resource/webpage? (for profit vs. nonprofit)
- Is advertising clearly marked?
- Can you tell if the information you are reading is an advertisement?
- Do the graphics, fonts, and verbiage play to the emotions?
 - *Take special note of capital letters, exclamation points and the use of declarative statements*
- Is the author using data improperly to promote a position or a product?

Currency/Timeliness

- Is there a date on the page?
- When was the page last updated
- Do the links work?
- Has there been more recent research on the subject?

Coverage

- Is the information complete?
- Are there sources given for additional information?

Part of General Outline taken from - *From snake oil to penicillin: Evaluating consumer health information on the internet* Retrieved 8/17/2011, 2011, from <http://nmlm.gov/training/consumer/snakeoil/index.html>