Critically Evaluating Information Sources

AUTHORITY

- Is the author an expert on the topic? Look for the author’s credentials, educational background, and experience. Can you verify that information?
- Is the author associated with a reputable institution or organization?
- If your source is a journal or magazine, is it a scholarly (academic) journal or a popular magazine?

CONTENT & COVERAGE

- What type of audience is the author addressing?
- Are the main points clearly presented?
- Does the information appear to be valid, well-researched, and supported by evidence?
- Is there a bibliography?
- Is your topic covered comprehensively (with enough detail) or only briefly?

ACCURACY & OBJECTIVITY

- What is the purpose of the book, article, or web site?
- Is the information presented fact, opinion, or propaganda? Is any bias or commercial motive clearly stated?
- Are the ideas and arguments more or less in line with other sources on the same topic?

CURRENCY

- When was the source published (or updated, for websites)?
- Is the source current enough for your topic?
Source Evaluation Worksheet

Type of source: ❑ Book  ❑ Scholarly Journal  ❑ Magazine or Newspaper  ❑ Website  ❑ Other: __________________________________________

Title of source: __________________________________________

Publication information (name of publisher, publication title, or sponsoring organization for websites): __________________________________________

1. AUTHORITY
   What evidence can you find that the author is an expert or that you can trust the information given?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. CONTENT & COVERAGE
   Is the information presented clearly and with enough detail? Does the author provide his/her sources?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. ACCURACY & OBJECTIVITY
   What is the author’s purpose in presenting the information? Can you distinguish fact from opinion?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

4. CURRENCY
   Is it current enough for your topic?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5. USEFULNESS
   How does this information contribute to the purpose of my research?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________