MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MxCC Jean Burr Smith Library

HOW TO EVALUATE A VIDEO:
Tips for Finding Quality Information

Students may choose a number of different types of resources for academic study including videos and movies. It is important to evaluate what you find in terms of **Timeliness, Reliability, Authority, and Purpose.** You want to T-R-A-P only quality, accurate, and unbiased information. It is sometimes difficult to find all the pieces you need to evaluate web sites and to cite them, so here are a few tips:.

Timeliness *(when?)*
- Look for the date created/last updated.
- If the video is old, is it historical or a valuable primary source, or is it just out of date and no longer relevant?
- Is the movie, video, or film clip something that will still be available to be viewed later? **In scholarly research it is essential that resources used to support something be available by others later**--even decades or centuries later. Is it likely that the video will be removed from the Web site?
- Is it in a currently useable format? For example DVD vs. VHS

Reliability *(how?)*
Look for indicators of credible and accurate information.
- Look for copyright statements and/or permission to use.
- Who is responsible for the movie, video, or film clip? Are all creators identified (writer, director, producer, editor, etc.)?
    - Is it a government agency, educational, business/company, association, news bureau, personal/individual, or a studio?
- Is there any bias? (of the author or sponsor): Some movie, video, or film clips have an inherent bias that will impact everything that appears in them.
    - For examples does the creator have any obvious political affiliations, business connections, or is it meant to be a satire (a joke)

Authority *(who?)*
- Who owns or distributes the video?
- Is the writer an expert in this field? What else has he/she created? Does the director have previous experience? Does the video have an identifiable, respectable creator?
- If not, the video must be used with caution in a research context. (If it is strictly for the viewer's entertainment, creator credibility does not matter).

Purpose *(why? what?)*

- Is the information intended for a particular audience based on expertise (scholarly or general interest), age, group affiliation, or some other criteria (such as a potential sales customer)?

- Why was it created? To entertain, to inform, to share information, to advertise or to influence beliefs or views?
- Is the information on topic and does it suit your needs? Does it add anything to what you already have?
- What about the content?
    - Is the movie, video, or film clip organized and focused on a topic or story? What is the goal of the video?
    - Is there a central theme? Is there a narrative structure? Does it make linear sense?
    - If it is a news report or documentary, who is interviewed? What questions are asked? Do phrases appear as if they might have been taken out of context? It is a "gotcha" interview or a sincere attempt to discover something informative or productive?
    - Are any stereotypes (positive or negative) reinforced or challenged?

Here is a general video for evaluating sources that can be applied to videos as well

http://youtu.be/EyMT08mD7Ds

Resources consulted: Center for Learning and Teaching, SUNY Empire State College. "Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask." *Finding Information on the Internet: A Tutorial.* May 2009. UC Berkeley Library. 6 July 2009 <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>. Kapoun, Jim. "Teaching undergrads WEB evaluation: A guide for library instruction." C&RL News (July/August 1998): 522-523.
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