



HOW TO EVALUATE A PRINT BOOK OR ARTICLE: Tips for Finding Quality Information

Timeliness (*when?*)

- When was the material published? Books typically include a publication date on the inside cover or title page. For some research (e.g., historical facts), currency may not be important; for others (medical, legal), it is.
- If a print edition is older, check the library catalog for an updated copy.

Reliability (*how?*)

- Based on what you may already know about the topic, does the information appear credible? Can you verify factual information through another source?
- Is there a bibliography, footnotes, and other documentation of the secondary sources used?

Authority (*who?*)

- Does the person have the expertise to write on the topic? Check the library catalog or database to look up biographical info on the author and/or to determine if the author has written anything else on the topic. The article itself may include the author's credentials or you can check the book's dust jacket.
- Is the book or article written by a knowledgeable and established institution, group, or organization?

Purpose (*why? what?*)

- Be aware that the author or publisher may have a particular point of view (religious, political, cultural or professional) that might bias his/her findings or attempt to persuade you to think in a certain way.
- Be aware that some articles are written as strictly opinion pieces.
- Determine if the periodical is popular or scholarly (peer-reviewed by other experts in the field), and if it's the right choice for your assignment.

Adapted from: Long Island University Library. *Library Workshop Manual: Section 4*. Retrieved Nov. 3, 2010, from Long Island University's Web site:

<http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workbook/evaluate.htm#evaluating>