

Criteria for Evaluating Print and Electronic Resources

Evaluating resources is a crucial step in the research process. Whether in print or in electronic form, resources should be scrutinized and evaluated using a standard set of criteria such as the ones listed below.

COVERAGE

What topics are included in the work?
Are the topics included explored in depth?
Is it well written, organized logically, main points clearly presented?
Are there references, appendices, or bibliography?

AUTHORITY

What are the author's credentials - educational background, past writing or affiliations?
Have the authors been cited by other writers?
How reputable is the publisher?

CURRENCY

Is the publication date clearly labeled?
Is the content of the work up-to-date for the specific topic?
Is the work a second or later edition indicating revision and updating of the contents?

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Is the work written for a particular audience - adult, juvenile, scholar, professional?
If the publication is a journal, is it scholarly or popular (indicating the level of complexity)?
What is the work's purpose? To entertain? To inform? To persuade? Unclear?

ACCURACY

How reliable and free from error is the information?
Are there editors and fact checkers?
Is the information well-researched with supporting references?

OBJECTIVITY

Is the information presented factual (verifiable) with a minimum of bias?
To what extent is the information trying to sway the opinion of the audience?

For more information on evaluating resources:

Thinking Critically about WWW Resources at <http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/critical/index.htm>

Evaluating Web Pages by Widener at <http://www2.widener.edu/Wolfgram-Memorial-Library/webevaluation/webeval.htm>

Practical Steps in Evaluating Internet Resources at <http://milton.mse.jhu.edu/research/education/practical.html>