



Library and Media Center

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## EVALUATING INFORMATION SOURCES

Use the following criteria to distinguish the quality information from the CRAAP

### **C**urrency = *timeliness*

- When was the information published or posted?
- Have the links in a Web site or the citations in a bibliography been revised or updated?
- Does the topic require current information or will older sources work?
- Are the links on a website functional?

### **R**elevancy = *importance for your needs*

- Is the information provided on target for your specific information needs?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the content appropriate for a college-level paper (not too elementary or advanced)?
- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?

### **A**uthority = *source*

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor? Is contact information provided?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- Is the author qualified in the subject covered?
- What are the goals/values of the sponsoring institution? Is it legitimate, reputable?
- Does the website URL reveal anything about the source (.com, .edu, .gov, .org, .net)? Is it an official or personal site? (a ~ in the URL often indicates a personal website)

### **A**ccuracy = *reliability, truthfulness, correctness*

- Where does the information come from? Is it reprinted/excerpted from another source?
- Could the information be verified in other sources or supported by evidence?
- Is there a bibliography that indicates the author's sources of information?
- Is the author's methodology presented?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or typographical errors?

### **P**urpose = *reason for existence*

- What is the purpose of the information (to inform, teach, sell, entertain, persuade, express a point of view)?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions clear?
- Does the information seem based in fact or opinion?
- Is the point of view objective and impartial or is the language exaggerated and inflammatory?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

Content based on **Applying the CRAAP Test** by Meriam Library, California State, Chico

## Selecting the Best Information Sources

- All information sources are not the same
- The best information for a particular information need might be found in a variety of different places
- Selecting the best information source for your topic is part of evaluating your sources
- To be a well-educated college student, you need to know how to identify, select, access, search for, utilize, evaluate, and cite the information found in a variety of sources including books, periodical articles of all types, primary and secondary sources, and the Internet
- Community college students transferring to 4 year institutions will be expected to use a variety of sources to complete research assignments, **not just the Internet**
- The Internet is not necessarily the best, first place to go for information
- Begin your research with overview or background information in a reference source or other book to gain understanding before looking for articles that often contain very specific, focused information.
- Electronic sources are not “better” than print sources. The fact that a source is “easy” to use or access does not mean it is the best source. One source may be electronic at one library and in print format at another—**the content is the same**. The format does not determine the value or relevance of the information. Critical thinking is required to do that.

<b>Characteristics of Information Sources – Why Use a Particular Source?</b>	
<b>A book</b> (reference, circulating, or ebook)	<p>Find background information and/or context for beginning research on a topic—identify search terminology</p> <p>Find in-depth information synthesized from many sources</p> <p>Book authors spend years researching a topic--expert on the topic</p> <p>Identify additional resources using the bibliography, including special collections available on the topic around the world, on the Internet, etc.</p> <p>Some disciplines communicate scholarship primarily through books (history)</p> <p>Not necessary to read the entire book—one chapter might cover the topic</p> <p>Published, copyrighted information—less evaluation necessary</p> <p>Because publishing takes time, not the most current information</p>
<b>A scholarly article</b>	<p>Articles written by scholars in a specific field for other scholars primarily to report research findings—professional literature</p> <p>Articles are reviewed and selected by a group of peers (peer-reviewed or refereed)</p> <p>Best source for current research, plus opinions on current issues &amp; statistics</p> <p>Not the best source for beginning information on a topic—articles are very focused and written for scholars already knowledgeable</p> <p>References to additional sources</p> <p>Published, copyrighted information—less evaluation necessary</p>
<b>Other periodicals</b> (popular magazines, substantive news sources such as Time magazine, trade publications, newspapers, etc.)	<p>Articles written by editors, staff writers, or reporters for the general public</p> <p>Published regularly—current information</p> <p>Shorter articles—cover stories may provide overview/background information</p> <p>Some have a specific philosophy (political, etc.) or topic focus</p> <p>Some are good sources for: book, film, and movie reviews</p> <p>Trade publications publish articles written for people working in a specific field or industry</p> <p>Published, copyrighted information—less evaluation necessary</p>
<b>The Internet</b>	<p>A self-publishing medium</p> <p>Information found there has not been through the publishing process</p> <p>Websites must be thoroughly evaluated—evaluation takes time</p> <p>Websites are often difficult to cite (multiple titles, variety of document types, etc.)</p> <p>Good source for: news and current events; government information; statistics; information on educational institutions; companies, and non-profit organizations; selected electronic journals and primary sources; reference works; product info; travel, entertainment, personal information</p>