Source Evaluation Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate the information sources you discover as a result of performing a search. Check the items in each of the following categories:

Purpose

- What is the purpose or motivation for the source? (E.g., educational, commercial, entertainment, or promotional.)
- Is it trying to sell you something? How easy is it to differentiate advertisement from content in the source?
- Based on your knowledge, is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- Who is the intended audience for the information, and how is this fact reflected in the organization and presentation of the material?

Authority

- Is the author identifiable?
- What is the author's background? (E.g., experience, credentials, and occupation, and has he or she published anything else on the topic?)
- Does the author cite his or her sources?

Currency

- When was the resource last updated or revised, and how often is it updated?

Reliability

How stable does the resource seem to be? The resource's dependability (particularly in the case of Web sites) is important if it is going to be cited as a source or recommended for use by others.

- For Web sites, do most of the links on the page work?
- From your evaluation of currency and authority, do you think the resource will be there the next time you visit it?

Coverage

- What information is included or omitted?
- Is the resource completed or under construction?

These are not the only criteria you will need to look at. Depending on what your professor has asked you for and on your research needs, you may need to look for certain kinds of material. In academic research in particular, your professor may ask you to find scholarly, peer-reviewed, or primary sources.