

## Evaluating Sources

Since the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, the number of books has grown exponentially. The Internet has opened up even more sources of information. The quality of this information though is often questionable. Academic research requires that your sources be reliable, so it is imperative that you carefully evaluate your sources before including them in your papers. Here are some guidelines to assess the usefulness of a source.

### For books and periodicals

- Author: Is the author an expert in the particular topic? Has your professor mentioned this author? Have you seen this author cited in other scholarly works? Is the author associated with a respectable organization?
- Publisher: scholarly? popular? alternative?
- Place of publication: US? Germany? Afghanistan?
- Date of publication: Older sources will not incorporate new research into the topic. This may or may not be important.
- Audience: For whom was the source written-the general public, scholars, advocates, or opponents? Is the content very technical or much too elementary?
- Content: Is the information valid and well researched or is it merely conjecture and unsupported by evidence? What is the author's intention? Is there a bibliography at the end of the work?

### For the Internet:

Don't be fooled by credible looking information on the Internet. Remember any 10 year old can create a website. In addition to the guidelines for books and periodicals be aware of several other potential areas of concern.

- Author: What person or organization has posted this information? Who could you contact if you needed a clarification?
- Design of the page: Are there misspellings? How user-friendly is the page? Are any hyperlinks usable? Is the author, sponsoring organization, and/or date of posting included?
- Purpose of site: Was the site designed to provide information, to persuade, or maybe to advertise? Who is the intended audience?