Criteria for the Evaluation of Resources

Use this worksheet to easily evaluate the scholarship and usefulness of research resources both hard and softcopy. As best you can, ask and answer the questions below of each and every item you discover in the course of your research. Choose only those resources best suited to the research need.

The computer icon ☐ indicates questions that apply specifically to Internet sources found in the research process. The other questions should be applied to any type of resource regardless of format.

**Purpose:** read the table of contents, preface, introduction and conclusion to answer these questions.

- What is the purpose of the material?
- Who is the intended audience based on content, tone and style?
- Does this correspond to your needs?

**Source:** examine editorial information, publication information, “About”. Search the publisher’s and author’s Web sites for background information. Use “Ulrich’s Periodical Directory” for information on Journals and use “Literary Market Place” or “Christian Writer’s Market Guide” for information on book publishers.

- What is the authority or expertise of the individual or group that created this work?
- Is the author the original creator of the information (primary source)?
- Does s/he indicate his/her occupation, years of experience, position, or education?
- ☐ Who mounted the information (author/producer)?
- ☐ What institution (company, government, university, etc.) or Internet provider supports this information?
- ☐ Is contact information for the author or producer included in the document?

**Content:** read book reviews, abstracts, first and last paragraphs of article or related chapter. For more help see these Research Guides: “Finding Reviews”, “Identifying Scholarly Books”, “Identifying Scholarly Periodicals” on the library Web site.

- Accuracy
  - Does the material exhibit a strong bias or slant?
  - Are sources clearly stated and given appropriate credit whether original or borrowed?

- Comprehensiveness
  - What is the depth of coverage? Does it cover a specific time period or aspect of the topic, or does it strive to be comprehensive?
  - Are there additional print and electronic sources to complement the information?
Currency

- What is the publication date of the work?

- What is the latest edition available?

- When was the material last updated?

- Is the material on the page current?

- Links:
  - Are the links relevant and appropriate?
  - Are the links given the best available?

To find reputable scholarly Websites, use subject directories (instead of search engines) that provide critically annotated collections of high quality Internet resources hand selected and compiled by librarians, scholars and experts in the field. See: Academic Info Subject Guides, BUBL Link (UK), Digital Librarian, INFOMINE, Intute (UK), Invisible Web Directory, Librarian’s Internet Index, Scout Report Archives, Virtual Library

Style and Functionality: indicators of scholarship

- Is the material laid out clearly and logically with well organized subsections?

- Is the writing style appropriate for the intended audience?

- Is there an index?

- Is the extent of the index appropriate to the size and depth of coverage of the resource?

- How detailed is the Table of Contents?

- Is there a Bibliography?

- Are the sources listed in the Bibliography appropriate for the size and depth of coverage of the work?

  - Is the site easy to navigate?
    - Does it have clearly labeled Back, Go To Top icons/links?
    - Are there internal indexing links on lengthy pages?

  - Do the links to remote sites all work?

  - Does it have searching capabilities if the site is extensive?

  - What is the quality of graphics, illustrations or multimedia?