Evaluating Resources

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Deciding if a resource is appropriate for your research is fairly straightforward. It just takes a little detective work and some critical thinking. Using this sheet, let’s look at the key areas for evaluating resources.

1. Authority & Credibility
   A key area in determining credibility is the author(s).

   **Ask yourself:**
   - Does the author have the training, education, experience, etc. to write knowledgeably about this topic?
   - Is the author a member of a profession or an organization or in some other way an expert on the topic?

   **Do the detective work:**
   - Many authors’ credentials (MD, PhD, etc.) and/or affiliation (university, business, hospital, association, etc.) are listed with their name on an article.
   - Look for references at the end of the article detailing the references the author used. Using references shows the depth of research the author has done. When references from another expert are used they add credibility and weight to the article.
   - If an author did not use any references as yourself why not.

2. Transparency & Objectivity
   Another area in determining a resource’s credibility is in how the information is presented.

   **Ask yourself:**
   - What is the article about?
   - Who is the author and what is his/her purpose in writing this?

   **Do the detective work:**
   - What is the tone of voice the author uses in presenting the information?
   - Is the author expressing an opinion? Is the information one-sided, or are both sides of an issue presented?
   - Can you make your own decision regarding the information provided? Or is the author pushing to one side of an issue?
3. Accuracy
Accuracy is another key area in determining credibility. Is the information correct or is it incorrect?

- When writing college papers accuracy is very important. You don’t want to include information in your paper or project that may be inaccurate. You want to provide your readers with the best information you can find.
- Choosing articles from the BCC Library academic databases is a better choice than looking for articles on the Internet. The BCC databases have been specifically selected to provide academic research and resources for higher education institutions, like BCC!
- Unlike resources on the Internet which may or may not be reliable, articles in the BCC databases are trustworthy.

However, having said this, both research based studies and news reports have been proven to have errors in the past. No system is perfect, so question everything!

4. Currency & Scope
How current does your information need to be? Knowing your information needs will help in determining currency and scope.

Ask yourself:

- When was this article written? If it refers to studies/polls/research, how old is that information?
- Does your research question require that you have the latest information? Does the subject matter you’re covering change frequently? Do you need older information for background?
- Does the article give detailed information/reporting? Or is it a summary/overview? Does it present new research? Which is appropriate for your needs?