Determining if a Resource is Appropriate for Academic Use

When performing research for an assignment, it is essential to evaluate every resource. There is an abundance of information available in print and on the internet, and it is getting harder and harder to determine if a resource should be considered trustworthy. For instance, you can find different scholarly journal articles for and against the same topic. There are articles that discuss the need to modify our consumption of fossil fuels because it contributes to global warming, and others denying the existence of global warming altogether; both can be found in scholarly journals. Evaluating information is an important step in the research process and is a skill that few possess. Every author has a purpose for writing the article. Whether they may want you to share the same view as them and agree with their opinions, buy products, use their statistics, or even disseminate false information, it is important to evaluate the information before you decide to cite the source.

Provided below is a quick checklist to help evaluate a resource to determine if it should be considered trustworthy:

- What is the **purpose** of the resource? Is it to persuade, inform, or to prove? Is the source promoting a certain agenda? Is it biased? Are you getting **balanced information**?
- What is the **type of resource**? Scholarly Journal, trade journal, website, popular magazine, newspaper article, etc.
- What is the **content** of the resource? Is it original research, a review, or an informative source?
- Who published or **authored** this page?
- Is the **author’s information** listed? Is the author **suitable** or **qualified** to address the topic at hand?
- Can you verify the author’s, creator’s or organization’s **credentials**?
- If a webpage, can you **contact** the author? In many cases, an email address alone is **not** sufficient.
- Are the sources **documented and cited**? Are the citations accurate?
- What is the **date** of publication? Is the information on the **current**? Look at the works cited or bibliography; are the sources the author used **current** and acceptable for academic use?
- If a webpage, when was the **last time it was revised**? Are there links to **additional, reliable resources** for the topic? If so, are the links still working? Are the links biased?
- If a website, does it belong to someone’s personal account rather than an organization?
- How does the information compare to other related resources?
- If statistics are given, are **dates** and **sources of the statistics** provided?
- If a website, are there a lot of advertisements on the page? Are they relevant to the website's content?

It’s important to ask questions of any resource you plan to use in your research. Remember, only you can decide if the resource is trustworthy.

For additional information, visit our LibGuide, Evaluating Websites for Academic Research. [http://libguides.newhaven.edu/evalwebsites](http://libguides.newhaven.edu/evalwebsites)

If you need help with the evaluation process, contact a librarian (contact information available at the top of this paper) and we will be happy to help you.