

Evaluating Sources

- I. **A working bibliography** is a list of sources that you may ultimately use for your project. As you find and begin to evaluate research sources- articles, books, Websites, and so on- you should record information for every source you think you might use. (Including everything you need to find the source again and cite it correctly.)
 - a. Book: call #, Author(s) or Editor(s), Title and Subtitle, Place of publication, Publisher, Yr. of publication
 - b. Periodical Article: call # of periodical, Author (s), title of article, name of periodical, vol. #, issue #, Date of issue, page numbers
 - c. Electronic source: Author(s) if available, title of document, title of site, Editor of site, sponsor of site, publication information for print version of source, Name of database or online service, Date last updated, Date of access, URL
- II. **Usefulness and Credibility:**
 - a. Your purpose: What will this source add to your research project?
 - b. Relevance: How closely related is the source to the narrowed topic you are pursuing?
 - c. Credentials of the publisher or sponsor: What can you learn about the publisher or sponsor you are using? (.gov, .com, .edu, .org, .mil, .net)
 - d. Credentials of the author.
 - e. Date of publication: recent sources are often more useful than older ones.
 - f. Stance of the source: does the source present the facts, or does it interpret or evaluate them? What is the tone of the source? What facts are left out?
- III. **Questions to ask as you begin selection of your topic and sources:**
 - a. What source or what kind of source would be the most credible for providing information in this particular case?
 - b. Which sources are likely to be fair, objective, lacking hidden motives?
 - c. Do you want facts, opinions (authoritative or just anyone's), reasoned arguments, statistics, narratives, eyewitness reports, descriptions?

IV. Summary of the CARS Checklist for Research Source Evaluation :

Credibility	trustworthy source, author's credentials, evidence of quality control, known or respected authority, organizational support. Goal: an authoritative source, a source that supplies some good evidence that allows you to trust it.
Accuracy	up to date, factual, detailed, exact, comprehensive, audience and purpose reflect intentions of completeness and accuracy. Goal: a source that is correct today (not yesterday), a source that gives the whole truth.
Reasonableness	fair, balanced, objective, reasoned, no conflict of interest, absence of fallacies or slanted tone. Goal: a source that engages the subject thoughtfully and reasonably, concerned with the truth.
Support	listed sources, contact information, available corroboration, claims supported, documentation supplied. Goal: a source that provides convincing evidence for the claims made, a source you can triangulate (find at least two other sources that support it).

Works Cited

Harris, Robert. "Evaluating Internet Research Sources." VirtualSalt. 15 June 2007. 4 November 2007
<<http://www.virtualsalt.com/mla.htm>>

Lunsford, Andrea and Marcia Muth. The St. Martin's Pocket Guide to Research and Documentation. Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 2008