More Questions to Evaluate Resources

Once you have gathered all your research material, you need to begin reading through it and evaluating its usefulness. You will probably want to make some notes as you go along, so you will need a pen and a pad of paper. As you go through your research material, you need to evaluate every piece of information that you are considering using for your research project. You want to ensure that the material you use is accurate, professional, and suitable for your topic. Keep the following guidelines in mind to help you evaluate your research materials. (copied with permission from the Ruben Salazar Library)

**Authority**

- Who is the author? What are his/her credentials for writing on this topic?
- Do you trust the author or producer of the information?
- Is the author working and writing under the auspices of a particular organization or agency? Is it a credible organization?
- Is the article or resource peer-reviewed, meaning the article has been evaluated by an expert who provides a recommendation if the article should be published?

**Timeliness**

- When was the information created, published, compiled?
- Is the information regularly updated? if so, do you need more current information?
Accuracy

- Do you think the information is fact, opinion, a sales piece, or something else?
- Is the information biased or does it state a particular point-of-view?
- Are facts cited and easily verified through footnotes or bibliographies to other credible sources?
- Is the language inflammatory or emotional?
- Are charts, tables, or data clearly identified and attributed to their source?
- Are the source, scope, and date of any statistics clearly labeled?
- Is it clear whether or not the information has been excerpted from a larger piece?
- Is there a way to tell if this is the most recent version of a particular piece?
- Reject misleading information or poorly documented information.

Coverage

- How extensive is the information and what is the purpose of the information?
- Is this a comprehensive or definitive edition, meant to give you all the information possible on the subject or does it cover a narrow aspect of the topic?
- Are obvious things like places, people, important events left out?
- Does the author acknowledge what is included and what is missing?
- Are all points-of-view acknowledged and given equal coverage?
- Is the work geared to an audience or level of expertise?
- Does it use specialized language or is it easily comprehensible?
• Does it cover a limited region, time period, group of people?
• Is the primary purpose to provide information?
  o To sell a product?
  o To make a political point?

**Point-of-View or Bias**

• Is there a particular bias or perspective?
• Is the item clear and forthcoming about its view of the subject?
• If the item contains advertising, are the ads clearly distinguishable from the content?
  o Is the content driven by ad placement?

**Relevance**

• Is the information useful for your current research project?