

Blaine S. Kern Library

Evaluating a Source

Author

What is the author's educational background? Does he have experience in the subject area? Has he written other books and articles? Is he well-known? Has he been cited by your teacher or other sources? Is he associated with an organization? If you are using a website, does he provide an e-mail address?

Publication Date

What is the copyright date? Has a book been reprinted or revised? Reprints suggest a continuing demand. Revisions show that new material has been added. Has a website been recently updated? What is your subject? Is it one in which information rapidly becomes outdated? For example, are you using a book about space that says "we may one day get to the moon? Are you looking for a slang term from the 1980s in a dictionary published in the 1960s?

Publisher

Is the material published by a commercial publisher, a university press, or a professional organization? Is it self-published? Does the source originate from a public or commercial television or radio broadcast? Is it a newspaper, magazine or scholarly journal? In which country was the material published? If you are using a website, what is the domain? .com (commercial) .edu (education) .org (organization) .gov (government) .mil (military)

Intended Audience

Is the material intended for a general audience or specialists in a field? Is it written for scholars, professionals, practitioners or enthusiasts? At which age group is it directed?

Content

Is the content fact, opinion or propaganda? Is it written in bias-free language or does it intentionally use terms meant to inflame? Is it well-researched? Are there footnotes? Does it have an extended bibliography? Why was it written?