

Evaluation of Books and Periodicals

PUBLISHER CREDENTIALS

- **Determine who the publisher is and why you think they are credible. To locate book publisher information search Google or another web search engine to locate the publisher's web site. You can also use AcqWeb's Directory of Publishers and Vendors at <http://acqweb.org/pubr.html>, or the *Books in Print* database. Most scholarly journals and popular magazines also have web sites.**
 - What other books or journals do they publish? Is the book published by a university press, a large commercial publisher, a small publisher, or an alternative press publisher? Is the journal or magazine published by a university press, an academic society, a large commercial publisher, or a small independent publisher? How does this impact the type of information they publish?

AUTHOR CREDENTIALS

- **Determine the author's credentials. Base your evaluation of the author on specific criteria, and state why you think the author is credible. Do not simply assert that the author is credible if you cannot explain why you think so. Consider the following questions:**
 - Does the author teach at a college or university, or work in a government agency or non-profit organization? Does the author have a graduate degree in the area she or he is writing about? Has the author written any other books or periodical articles, if so, are they on a similar topic? Does the author work for an organization concerned about the issues the author is writing about?

TYPE OF INFORMATION

- **Determine the type of information you are using.**
 - Is the information scholarly, popular, governmental or from a private business? Who is the intended audience--general public or other academics and researchers? Does the information really support your thesis and research questions?

PURPOSE & SCOPE

- **Determine the reason why the author has written the work. To help you determine the purpose and scope of a book you might want to locate book reviews. You can use the *Books in Print*, *Academic Search Premier*, or the *ProQuest Newspapers* databases to locate book reviews. You can also locate book reviews at Amazon.com.**
 - Is the author making an argument for personal gain, offering an opinion, giving a factual report or news item, presenting a well researched scholarly opinion, or relaying a personal opinion? Can you identify objective writing (both sides of the argument) or a subjective bias (expressing one's own point of view)?

SOURCES

- **Consider the sources that the author used to write the work, and decide if you think the sources are valid and credible.**
 - Can you determine where the author gathered the information, i.e. are there footnotes? If there are not footnotes, is there enough information about the author's sources within the text that you could follow-up and confirm the information? Is the information from original research, experiments, observation, interviews, or a synthesis of other books and documents? Does the author cite her or his own work without including other sources? Are secondary references (a bibliography, for example) provided?

TIMELINESS

- **Determine if the work is timely for your research and explain why.**
 - When was the material published? Does your research demand only current information or can you use information that is older? Most books take quite a bit of time to publish and information "ages" differently from discipline to discipline. A book that is 10 or more years old might still provide the latest research on a topic. You might also want to use information that is older in order to compare how the issue was dealt with in the past as compared to today.

STYLE

- **Consider the style of the writing and if it meets your research needs. Consider if you are able to understand and interpret the information.**
 - Is the writing style of the author clear and understandable? If not why not? Does the author legitimately need to use complex language because of the subject matter, or is the author using complex technical language to purposefully confuse the reader? Are helpful charts, graphs, or pictures provided?