**Four Criteria for Evaluating Sources**

**Source: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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| **Authority**Authority reveals that the person, institution or agency responsible for a publication has the qualifications and knowledge to do so. | * Author: Is the author clearly identified? **Books**: look on the cover or for an author page, **Website**: check for an “About” or “Contact” section, **Article**: look below the title or at the end of the page. If a name is given, you might try googling the author to find out more about him/her.
* Credentials: What qualifications (e.g. education) or personal background (e.g. employment experience) does the author have that gives him/her the authority to present information on this topic?
* Check to see if the publication is supported or published by an organization or a commercial body.
* **Websites:** Is the contact information available?
 |  |
| **Purpose**The purpose of the information presented in the source should be clear. It may be to inform, persuade, state an opinion, entertain, or parody something or someone. | * What is the purpose of this publication?
* Is the information geared to a specific audience (students, scholars, general reader, etc.)?
* Is the information presented with a particular bias?
* Does the information try to sway the audience?
* Is the source trying to explain, inform, persuade, or sell something?
* **Websites:** Are the outside links appropriate for the site?
* **Websites**: Check the domain of the site. The URL may indicate its purpose. (e.g. .edu = American university
 |  |
| **Currency**Currency of the publication refers to: 1) how current the information presented is, and 2) how often the information is updated or maintained.  | * When was the information originally written? Has it been revised, or updated?
* Do you need the most recent information possible?
* How recent are the references cited by the author?
* **Websites**: are links to other sites current?
* Remember that publishing books and peer-reviewed articles takes time.
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| **Reliability**To ensure reliability scholarly articles undergo a peer-review process and books are reviewed by editors.There are few standards to verify the accuracy of information on the web. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the reader to assess the information presented. | * Is the author affiliated with a known, respectable institution?
* **Article**: is it peer-reviewed? If not, what is the reputation of the journal/magazine/newspaper?
* **Book:** has it been published by an academic publisher or is it a quality general publisher? Does the publisher specialize in certain subject areas?
* Do statistics and other factual information receive proper references as to their origin?
* Does the reading you have already done on the subject make the information seem accurate?
* Does the text follow basic rules of grammar, spelling and composition?
* Is a bibliography or reference list included?
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Cornelia Penner, Champlain College St. Lambert, revised January 2014.

Adapted from Dalhousie University Libraries: <http://libraries.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/library/CoreSkills/6_Criteria_for_Websites.pdf> and Champlain College Saint-Lambert: <http://www.unlockingresearch.com/evaluate-information/quality/>