Information Literacy 7
Evaluate Information and Its Sources Critically

It is essential to evaluate information and its source. The following criteria are useful in examining information from a book, a magazine, on a website, or social media. There is no organization or editorial process that oversees the Internet to ensure accuracy, objectivity, or currency. For this reason, it is especially important to evaluate information on the Internet.

1. **Accuracy:** *The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content.*
   - Where does the information come from?
   - Are there other sources that verify the information? Is it supported by evidence?
   - Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
   - Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?

2. **Authority:** *The source of the information*
   - Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor? What are their credentials?
   - Are they experts in the field of information you are researching?
   - Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
   - Is the information part of the main web page or is it a separate document?
   - Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

   - **.com, .net & .org** = commercial and organizational
   - **.mil** = military
   - **.gov** = US government
   - **.edu** = US educational institutions
   - **.us** = United States
   - **.uk** = United Kingdom

3. **Relevance:** *The importance of the information for your needs*
   - Are all sides of a question presented? Are there limitations?
   - Is the information at an appropriate level (not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
   - Is the information designed for a specific audience? Who is the intended audience?
   - Is the information relevant to your information need? Can you use it?
   - If you are using a book, does it have a table of contents, a preface, an introduction, an index, and a bibliography?

4. **Currency:** *The timeliness of the information*
   - What is the date of information? Has it been updated?
   - Is currency important for your subject or will older sources work as well?
   - Is the information outdated?
   - Are the links functional for online information?

5. **Purpose:** *The reason the information exists.*
   - What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, persuade, or entertain?
   - What are the opinions of the author? Can you find them?
   - Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
   - Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
   - Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?
For more information on evaluating sources:

Websites:

How to Evaluate Information Resources (from Santa Rosa Junior College)
http://libguides.santarosa.edu/evaluate

Evaluating Resources (from UC Berkeley)
http://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/evaluating-resources

Books:

Stebbins, Leslie. *Finding Reliable Information Online: Adventures of an Information Sleuth*
Call Number ZA4230 .S74 2015

Taylor, Terry. *100% Information Literacy Success*
Call Number ZA3075 .T394 2007