



## Evaluating Books and Articles for Academic Use

It is important to assess the quality of books and periodical articles *before* using them for academic research. Be aware not every source belonging in a library is automatically appropriate for academic research. Libraries also have books and articles for entertainment purposes. Note: For information regarding evaluating *Web-only* sources, refer to the following Mission College Handout: *Evaluating Web Pages for Academic Research*.

**Authority:** What are the qualifications/credentials of the person or organization responsible for the book or article?

- Can you find/verify the author's qualification?
- Is the book publisher reputable?
- Is the periodical or periodical publisher reputable?

**If you cannot determine the authority of the author or publisher, then you should not use it.**

**Accuracy:** Is the information correct?

- Is there a bibliography or list of citations available?
- Is it clear who has responsibility for the information? Do they have expertise in the subject?

**If there is no method for you to determine if the information in the source is accurate, or that the author/publisher has expertise in the subject, then you should not use it.**

**Coverage:** Does the source adequately address your topic?

- Will the information in the book or article be helpful for your research?
- Does it include any new or useful information?

**If the source does not cover your topic well or provide any new or useful information, then you should not use it.**

**Purpose/Objectivity:** Can you determine the purpose and objectivity of the book or article?

- Is there an obvious purpose or audience?
- Is there a slant, or bias?
- Does the site try to sell a point of view or product?

**If the book or article is not objective, it may still be okay to use it; it will depend on the purpose of your research and your ability to find other sources that present the opposing viewpoint.**

**Currency:** When was the information published?

- What is the publication date?
- If material is presented in graphs and/or charts, is it clearly stated when the data was gathered?

**If the information is not current, it may still be okay to use it, but it depends on your topic. For example, a current date is not required for most literary topics such as John Steinbeck and *The Joy Luck Club*, or for historical topics such as World War II or the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign.**