**Week 5 Source Evaluation Worksheet**

First read the notes that begin on p. 2 of this handout and the table on p. 3. Then, complete the analysis for each of your sources.

1. Using APA format, identify the source and write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. A sample annotation can be found in the directions for this assignment.

1. Use the following criteria to evaluate each source:
   1. How current is this the source you are using? (If not current – explain why information is still applicable)
   2. How authoritative, credible, reliable? (For example: recognized expert; peer-reviewed journal; trusted site such as .edu, .gov, .mil; experienced and knowledgeable in the field; information consistent across several sources, etc.)
   3. Briefly state specifically how this source provides evidence that strongly supports your conclusion. For example, “the article discusses significant evidence that this diet provides all essential nutrients and supports my view that the diet is healthy” “this study shows that this diet is deficient in vitamin D and supports my point that this diet is not healthy” “this survey revealed that obesity is on a rapid rise among all demographic groups and supports my view that obesity is epidemic”
   4. If the information is “popular” or if it is from a blog, from a marketing site, or is persuasive in nature (i.e., an editorial or opinion piece, or a publication of a special interest group such as a trade organization, union, etc.) explain why you are using the source and why you cannot use a more substantive or scholarly source.

**Evaluating Sources – Notes**

1. Rate your journal and periodical sources (whether you are looking at hard copy or on-line) as scholarly, substantive or popular. The Table “Distinguishing between Scholarly and Non-scholarly Periodicals” will work for evaluating either print or on-line journals, newspapers, and periodicals.
2. Beware of bias in any specific article. Determine if the source is authoritative, credible, reliable, current and unbiased. (If not current, then information can be rated “valid, regardless of age,” -- i.e., a 1999 web-based article on the American Civil War is not “current”, but can be “valid regardless of age.”) All sources should be authoritative, credible, reliable, current and unbiased. If bias is found, state if bias may or may not affect the credibility and reliability of the information you will use and how you will compensate for possible bias.
3. For websites, generally speaking, .gov and .mil sites are acceptable sources in academic papers. Most .edu websites will be acceptable, but analyze under the criteria in 2 above.
4. If the website is a .com, .org or .biz website, you must further evaluate for authority, reliability and credibility. Never use a .com, .org or .biz site without evaluating across these criteria. **Be especially careful about blogs** – generally speaking, don’t use them. Many newspaper and magazines also publish to websites; evaluate those just as you would a journal or periodical.
   1. Authoritative
      * Who are the author(s)?
      * Are they recognized experts in their field? – check the <About> column or google the author’s name?
      * What is the level of education of the author? Experience? Knowledge of the subject?
      * Is the information at a level appropriate to an upper-level academic paper?
   2. Credible
      * How does the information compare to other, similar information? Always look for more than one source – verify that all points of view are represented
   3. Reliable
      * Is it timely?
      * Does it come from a trusted source?

**Distinguishing Between Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Publications**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **SCHOLARLY** | **SUBSTANTIVE** | **POPULAR** |
| **Examples** | *American Journal of Nursing*  *JAMA*  *New England Journal of Medicine*  *American Journal of Kidney Diseases* | *National Geographic*  *Psychology Today*  *NY Times*  *The Atlantic* | *Time*  *Vanity Fair*  *Huffington Post*  *USA Today* |
| **Purpose & Use** | * Knowledge dissemination * Reports of original research * in-depth topic analysis * Statistical information | * For profit * Current events and news * Introduces a subject * Interviews * Analysis and opinion | * For profit * Current events and news * Overview of topic * Entertainment * Sell products |
| **Audience** | * Reader knows the field (e.g., specialists) | * General audience | * General audience |
| **Authors** | * Researchers * Academics * Scholars | * Journalists * Freelance writers * Specialists or scholars | * Freelance writers * Staff writers * Journalists |
| **Content & Language** | * Description of research methods with conclusions * Objective * Assumes knowledge of language and specialist jargon * Article may have a specific structure * Usually peer-reviewed | * Explanation of a subject * Interpretation of a research article * May or may not be objective * Use of non-technical vocabulary * Shorter articles than in scholarly publications | * May be biased toward a particular point of view * Less depth * Everyday language * Often written like a story |
| **Publishers** | * Professional organizations * University or scholarly presses * Research institutions | * Commercial entities * Trade and professional organizations | * Commercial entities * Trade organizations |
| **Sources** | * Includes bibliography and/or notes * Includes extensive citation of sources * Includes author credentials | * Sometimes includes sources * May / may not include author credentials | * Rarely includes citations of sources * Rarely includes author credentials |
| **Graphics** | * Includes graphs, charts, and tables * Advertising is very rare | * Illustrated, often with photographs * Advertising is present | * Heavily illustrated * Lots of advertising |