



Evaluating information sources

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Welcome. This video will introduce you to criteria which will help you evaluate the information you find.



- Why do we need to evaluate?
- Not all information found is credible or reliable
- By evaluating it we can determine its usefulness to our needs

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Not all information found is credible and without knowing how to evaluate it you will not know if it is suitable to use for your assignments.

Information evaluation criteria

- **Authority**
- **Accuracy**
- **Objectivity**
- **Currency**
- **Coverage**

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There are 5 main criteria for evaluation: authority, accuracy and quality, objectivity, currency and coverage.

Authority

Who is the author or source?

- Is the author named?
- Do you know the author's qualifications or credentials or professional affiliations?
- Can you identify a publisher, institution or organisation responsible for the information?
- Internet sites – can you identify who is responsible?



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Authority deals with who created the information and their credentials - who they are in their field. If you are looking at a web site – who created it and is responsible for the information?

Authority

How did you find the information?

- Using the Library catalogue?
- Using one of the databases on the Library's Databases gateway?
- Surfing the web, e.g. Google and Google Scholar?

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Where you found the information may help you determine its usefulness. Has it come from a scholarly source such as a database or scholarly journal or has it come from the internet where anyone can publish virtually anything?



Scholarly article



Popular journal –
not scholarly



Specialized magazine – not scholarly



Newspaper articles –
not scholarly



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Only one item from this slide would be considered scholarly.

PC Magazine and National Geographic don't have a peer review process where the article is reviewed by experts in the field and approved first before being published.

The Sydney Morning Herald is a well known newspaper but its articles are not scholarly.

Peer Reviewed vs Popular journals

Peer Reviewed and Scholarly:

- Author credentials
- Author with specialist knowledge
- Abstract
- Written for scholars
- List of references

Popular

- May not have an author
- Author may not have in depth knowledge
- No abstract
- Written for the general population

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Articles from peer reviewed or scholarly journals provide more in depth information rather than popular journals that have a more superficial approach.

Accuracy & Quality

- The presence of a reference list is one indication of quality.
 - Are facts verified and from reliable sources?
 - Types of references
 - Scholarly
 - Journal articles
 - Academic books
 - Conference papers
 - Popular
 - Popular magazines
 - Newspapers
- Is there an abstract?
- Are conclusions justified by information provided?

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Does the author provide sources for facts and are they reliable?

What types of references have been used -scholarly sources or popular sources?

An abstract is usually an indication of quality.

Does the conclusion accurately reflect the information provided?

Scholarly Article with author information, abstract & references

References

Ashby, W. R. (1960). *Design for a brain: The origin of adaptive behavior* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Chapman and Hall.

Auvray, M., Lenay, C., & Stewart, J. (2009). Perceptual interactions in a minimalist virtual environment. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 27(1), 32–47.

Barandiaran, X., Di Paolo, E., & M. Rohde (2009). Defining agency: individuality, normativity, asymmetry and spatio-temporality in action. *Adaptive Behavior*, 17, 367–386.

Beer, R. D. (1995). A dynamical systems perspective on agent-environment interaction. *Artificial Intelligence*, 72(1–2), 173–215.

Beer, R. D. (1997). The dynamics of adaptive behavior: A research program. *Robotics and Autonomous Systems*, 20(2–4), 257–289.

Beer, R. D. (2003). The dynamics of active categorical perception in an evolved model agent. *Adaptive Behavior*, 11(4), 209–243.

Boden, M. (2006). *Mind as machine: A history of cognitive science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brooks, R. A. (1991). Intelligence without representation. *Artificial Intelligence*, 47(1–3), 139–160.

Newspaper article – no references

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The article is from a scholarly journal. It has author affiliations, an abstract and a list of references which refer to other scholarly works.

Abstracts and references are not generally found in a newspaper article.

Objectivity

- Intended audience
- Purpose of information
 - Inform
 - Persuade
 - Advertise
- Communicate research findings
- Cultural or political bias

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Objectivity -determining the information's purpose will help decide the usefulness of the information.

Who is it aimed at? Does it seem biased? Is it designed to sell something or is it presenting research findings?

Currency

- Is the information up to date?
- Do newer editions/revisions exist?

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Some subject areas such as technology demand current information. In other subject areas such as literature, information published several years ago may be just as valuable.

Coverage

- Depth of information
 - Correct facts – are they verified?
 - Trusted source – credentials of source or author
 - Information at appropriate depth or superficial?
 - Is information relevant for your purpose?
- Language used
- Intended audience



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The depth of coverage is a good indication of the usefulness of information.

Is the information covered in appropriate depth? Is it aimed at scholars or the general public?

Is it relevant to your research topic?

Does it tie in with other information you have already found.

The language used can indicate an intended audience and in turn the level of information provided.

Internet information extra tips

Domain information

- .gov** – government site
- .com** – commercial site
- .edu / .ac** – educational institution
- .org** – organisation
- .net** – networks, some organisations and Internet Service Providers

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Take note of the web address domain. Knowing the domain will help you determine the worth and accuracy of the information.

Not all .org sites are the official sites. Checking information “About us” on the site will often alert you to this.



www.library.uq.edu.au

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Thank you for watching. If you need further help visit the Library's website.