Evaluating Books

Books are considered a cornerstone of all research and go through a development and publishing process. However, authors have varying backgrounds and levels of experience concerning the topic on which they write. Likewise, some publishers are thought of more highly than others. Books also have different audiences. The following questions are designed to assist you in selecting the most appropriate books for your topic.

Author
Who is the author of the information?

• Does the author have credentials or degrees showing expertise in the subject?
• Does the author's occupation or life experience provide expertise?

Is the author affiliated with an organization?

• Is the organization well-known and reputable?
• Is the organization affiliated with a particular profession or a research institution?
• Do other resources refer to this organization and their research?

Is the author referenced in other sources?

• Has your instructor mentioned this author?
• Is this author cited in the bibliography of other resources such as subject reference works or journal articles?

Does the author have a particular bias?

Publisher
Who is the publisher of the book?

• Some publishers are known for publishing a specific quality or type of book such as scholarly works or general popular works.
• Other publishers are known for publishing books with a specific viewpoint or bias.

Content
Is the information reliable and accurate?

• Can the information be verified?
• Are references provided to other information resources in a bibliography or footnotes?

How does the information compare to other resources you have used?

• Does it thoroughly cover your topic?
• Does it cover a specific aspect of your topic in detail?
• Does it add new information or a different perspective on your topic than other resources?

Who is the intended audience?

• Is the resource written for specialists or for a general audience?

Is it well-written and organized in a logical manner?

• Can you follow the progression of ideas or are new ideas introduced out of nowhere?
• Is the resource readable? Does it have short, choppy sentences or is there sentence variety?

Currency
Is the information current for your topic?

• What is the date of the publication?
• Is your topic related to a field that is changing quickly and requires current information? Or is your topic related to a field where information from previous decades is needed or provides an interesting comparison?

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