EVALUATING SOURCES

Use this tip sheet to determine the reliability and usefulness of an information source

RELEVANCE  What is it about?
• Examine title, abstract, and subject headings for connections to your research.

AUTHORITY  Who created it?
• Research the reputation of the magazine, journal, or publisher.
• Locate and verify author credentials and affiliation(s).
• Identify parent organizations and funding sources.

ACCURACY  Is it reliable?
• Investigate whether conclusions are well-reasoned and supported with evidence.
• Verify information with another reputable source.

PURPOSE  Why was it written?
• Identify the intention of the source (to inform, persuade, etc.) to help detect potential bias.
• Identify intended audience (scholars, public, professionals).
• Inspect for author bias (e.g., omitting important information).

TIMELINESS  When was it created?
• Identify both when the research was conducted and the date of publication.
• Decide whether dates affect usefulness for your research.