How to Evaluate Information

Librarians suggest that you take a critical look at information that you decide to believe or use, especially Internet sources. The word “information” includes the good and the bad: Reputable information, bad information, dated information, misinformation, and propaganda. How can you distinguish? Rather than assuming something is trustworthy, look at it closely and ask yourself the following questions:

Authority

• Is it in a reputable research database or book?
• If found by search engine, does the domain name or URL tell you anything? (.gov, .edu, .org, .com, etc.)
• Can you find the author’s name and learn about his or her credentials?
• What more can you learn about the author or the affiliated institution? Look for an author statement or “About Us.”
• Is the information verified by way of a bibliography or footnotes?

Comprehensiveness

• What is the scope of the information, brief or in-depth?
• Is it written for a popular audience, or is it more technical and scholarly?

Purpose

• Is it written to inform, explain, or persuade?
• Can you discover a bias to the perspective of the author?
• Does it correlate to information and facts you found in other sources?

Accuracy

• How long ago was it created or revised?
• Is it up-to-date?

It’s your call!

• Use this sheet to decide if a particular source credible. Yes, or No, not really!