Evaluating Information

Evaluate the resources you find (particularly electronic information) in terms of quality, appropriateness/relevance, currency and bias.

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1 To Determine Currency, Authority, Relevance, ask Yourself:

- When was it published?
- Who is the publisher? A recognised professional body or an established publisher?
- What information is given - factual or opinion?
- Who is the author and what authority does s/he have? What are their credentials?
- What bias? Is the author being objective or biased? Bias is not necessarily wrong but you need to take it into account
- What assumptions does the author make?
- What evidence are the author’s conclusions based upon?
- Who is the intended audience – lay person, student, academic?

2 Comparing Scholarly Journals and Magazines:

- Who it is aimed at
- How to find them (e.g. in Newsagents? Or academic subscription databases?)
- Who they are published by
- Who they are written by
- Are they “peer-reviewed”
- What is their content
- What sources/supporting information is given (e.g. references, a bibliography?)
- How articles are obtained (e.g. is a password needed?)
- The 'look & feel' (e.g. glossy, adverts?)

3 Evaluation criteria – websites:

- Suitability
- Purpose of site
- Currency (is there a date?)
- Authority / credibility
- Coverage
- Accuracy
- References
- Presentation and overall quality