MINI-LESSON: EVALUATING SOURCES
WHY EVALUATE?

- You need to assess how appropriate an online or print journal article, a website, a book, a newspaper article, or other source that you want to cite will be for your research.
4 THINGS TO LOOK FOR

- Authority
- Accuracy
- Scope
- Primary Sources
AUTHORITY

• **Looking at an author's credentials**

• **Ask these questions:**

  • **Is there an author of the work? If so, is the author clearly identified?**
  
  • **Are the author's credentials for writing on this topic stated? For instance, journal articles often list the university or organization the authors are affiliated with.**

  • **Who published the information?**

  • **Does the source represent a group, organization, institution, corporation or government body?**

  • **For online sources, is there a way to contact the author and/or organization?**
ACCURACY

- Is the source part of an edited or peer-reviewed publication?
- What is the purpose of the website?
- Is it clear and easy to understand?
- Can factual information be verified through references to other credible sources?
- Is it well written and free from errors?
- Is it clear who has the responsibility for the accuracy of the information presented? Is it on a site like Wikipedia which can be edited by anyone?
- If data are presented in graphs or charts, is the source of the data clear?
CURRENCY

• Is there a date stating when the document was originally created?
• Is it clear when the source was last updated, revised or edited?
• Are there any indications that the material is updated frequently or consistently to ensure currency of the content?
• If online, are any links to other websites current?
• What goals/objectives does the site meet?
• How detailed is the info?
• Is there limited advertising?
• Is the content appropriate for the audience?
• Look at the domain!
• Is it biased?
• IS THE INFORMATION COMPLETE AND COMPREHENSIVE?
• IS IT FACTUAL OR IS IT AN OPINION?
• IS THE INFORMATION CITED?
• ARE OTHER LINKS PROVIDED?
• IS IT FREE OR DOES IT COST MONEY TO OBTAIN INFORMATION?