

Evaluating Magazine, Journal & Newspaper Articles and Print Resources

When collecting resources for your research, you may be looking for primary and secondary sources, scholarly and popular sources, older and newer sources and impartial and biased sources.

Some information has already been “filtered” by editors, peer reviewers and authorities on the subject, but it is still important for you to analyze the author, publisher and content of a work to determine relevance and reliability.

Does the publication relate to your topic so that it is useful for your research? (Relevance)

General vs. Specific

Look at which sources cover your topic on a general level and which are more specific or technical. You can check this by skimming the title, table of contents or an abstract. An assortment of general and specific sources is good if you are working with this topic for the first time.

Level of Understanding

A source that is too easy or too advanced might not be useful to you. You want sources that are at a level you can understand, yet still be challenged.

What is the quality of the publication and how accurate is it? (Reliability)

Authority

Finding the authority of a source means determining who wrote it and what his/her background is with the subject. Is this author an expert on the subject? If not, is that important? If the source does not give biographical information, consult a biographical reference source. Example: If no information is available, examine the resources you have been using for other works by the author.

Accuracy

It is important to know where the author got his/her facts and if the facts are correct. A bibliography of the source can show you which references the author used to get his/her information. If the author supports his/her statements with references, the source is more reliable.

Currency

For some subjects, currency of information is extremely important, particularly in fields that are constantly changing, like Medicine or Technology. For other subjects, like History or English, older materials may be just as valuable as newer ones. Look at the date of publication on your source.

Purpose

Read the source you are evaluating. Determine whether the source is published by an organization with a particular purpose by consulting a reference source such as the ones listed below. Determine whether the work attempts to sell a particular point of view. Determine if the source is scholarly or popular.

Bias

What is the purpose of the source? Is there a particular point of view?

Reference Books and Online Resources in YC Library:

- Bowker's *Magazines for Libraries* (REF Z6941.M23) profiles all types of publications
- AND
- Ulrichsweb (through our Article Databases).