

# Evaluating Research Sources

Questions to ask about a secondary source:

## 1. Who is the author?

What are his/her credentials and professional affiliation? What is his/her area of expertise?

Does the author have a bias or ulterior motive?

What else has the author written?

## 2. What is the date of the publication?

Is it more than twenty years old?

Is it the latest edition, or is there a revised edition available?

## 3. Who is the publisher?

A university press? A scholastic publisher? A commercial publisher?

Is a journal article from a peer-reviewed journal? Does the journal have an editorial slant?

## 4. Content

Is there a bibliography? An index? Footnotes?

Are key concepts and technical terms clearly defined?

Are statements supported by evidence? Is the evidence up-to-date?

Are his conclusions based on a single piece of evidence?

Is the counter-evidence examined?

Is the author objective and impartial, or does he use inflammatory language? Is the information presented as fact or opinion?

Are his arguments supported by other works on the subject?

## 5. Coverage

Does the work update other works? Does it substantiate other works?

Does it add new information?

Is it a broad overview, a comprehensive in-depth survey, or a narrow focus on a

specific aspect of the subject?

What is the intended audience?

Is the publication popular or scholarly? What age level is targeted?

## 6. Can you find book reviews for a book?

Do different reviewers agree about the book? Do they suggest other titles that

be better?

*“Constant vigilance!”*