Evaluating Resources: Credibility Criteria

There are many aspects of information sources which can help you decide if a source is appropriate to use in your research. The following are questions to ask yourself to help determine if a source is useful for your research or not.

| Authority | ✓ Who wrote it?  
| ✓ What are the credentials of the author(s)? What degree(s) does the author(s) hold? From what college or university?  
| ✓ Where does the author(s) work? Can you find their contact information?  
| ✓ What other books or articles has the author(s) written and on what subjects?  
| ✓ Are there editors, reviewers or sponsors listed?  
| ✓ For web sites, what is the domain (.edu, .gov, .com), and who is responsible for the site? |
| Sources | ✓ Is information presented as fact? If yes...  
| ✓ Does the author provide documentation? (Bibliography, Footnotes, etc.)  
| ✓ If documentation/sources are included, are they from credible sources? |
| Purpose | ✓ What is the purpose of this information—to inform, explain, or persuade?  
| ✓ Who is the intended audience (general public, students, researchers, etc.)?  
| ✓ Is the content aimed at a general audience, or is it written for readers with expertise in the subject?  
| ✓ Does the source argue a perspective or specific opinion?  
| ✓ Is the source intended to entertain or sell? |
| Evenness | ✓ Is any sort of bias evident?  
| ✓ If there is bias, does the author acknowledge it?  
| ✓ Does the information appear to be valid, well-researched, and supported by evidence?  
| ✓ Does the information provide several points of view or just one?  
| ✓ Does the information reflect the agenda of a political, religious or social group or institution? |
| Coverage | ✓ Does this source provide information that is relevant to your needs?  
| ✓ Is the content level appropriate for your needs, i.e. not too basic, not too technical or advanced?  
| ✓ How does the author(s) explore the subject—detailed and in-depth, superficially with brief information, or an outline and some exploration?  
| ✓ Is the information considered scholarly or popular?  
| ✓ Is the information organized, logical, and clearly presented? |
| Timeliness | ✓ Is the information current for the topic?  
| ✓ What is the copyright date?  
| ✓ For a web site, when was it produced, mounted on the web and last updated?  
| ✓ For a web site, how up-to-date are the links?  
| ✓ Is the information a first edition or a revised and updated edition? |