Evaluate What you Find

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In your research you will come across many types of resources including books, articles and websites. You need to evaluate how appropriate these resources are for your research.

This guide helps you look at your sources critically by asking the right questions.

Evaluate Information with RADAR

Keep these questions "on your radar". You may use this approach for evaluating any source of information.

R: Relevance
How is the information that you have found relevant to your assignment?
- Does it relate to your topic or answer your research question?
- Does it meet the requirements for the assignment?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is the one you will use?

A: Authority
Who is the author/creator of the work? It may be a person, publisher, or an educational or professional organization.
- Is the author known as an expert in the field?
- Does the author work for a reputable institution, e.g. a university, research center or government?
- Does anyone cite this author/work? Does the author rely on other well-cited works?
- Is there contact information, e.g. a publisher or email address?

D: Date
When was the information created? Is the publication date important to you?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
- If older, is this a seminal or landmark work?
- Are the links functional?

A: Accuracy
What clues can you get about the accuracy of the source?
- Was the work published by a peer-reviewed journal, academic press or other reliable publisher?
- Was the information reviewed by an editor or a subject expert before it was published?
- Do the references support the author's argument? Are the references properly cited?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source?
- Does the source look professional? Are there advertisements, typographical errors, or biased language?

R: Reason for writing
Why was this information created?
- To produce a balanced, well-researched work that creates new knowledge?
- Was it written as part of an ongoing debate, to counter an opposing claim?
- Was it written in order to inform, sell, persuade, or entertain?

Adapted from:

Courtesy:
Helena Calogeridis. University of Waterloo Library.
http://subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/infosources
### Introduction to Scholarly vs Trade vs Popular Journals

The following is a list of **General Criteria** that can be used to distinguish between popular magazines, trade magazines, and scholarly journals. Some journals do not meet all the criteria in one category. For example, *Scientific American*, which has glossy pages and color pictures, contains both scholarly articles as well as those geared to a more general audience. **Accountability and content of the specific article** are the key criteria used to determine if an article is scholarly.

#### What to look for...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>POPULAR MAGAZINES</th>
<th>TRADE MAGAZINES</th>
<th>SCHOLARLY JOURNALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>eye-catching cover, glossy paper</td>
<td>glossy paper</td>
<td>plain cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pictures and illustrations in color</td>
<td>pictures and illustrations in color</td>
<td>plain paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each issue starts with page 1</td>
<td>each issue starts with page 1</td>
<td>members of a specific business, industry or organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>nonprofessionals, personalities, news, and general interest articles</td>
<td>industry trends, new products or techniques and organizational news</td>
<td>researchers and professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>articles written by staff, may be unsigned</td>
<td>articles written by staff or contributing authors</td>
<td>articles written by contributing authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>editorial review, no bibliographies</td>
<td>editorial review, may have short bibliographies</td>
<td>peer review/referred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>few or none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gourmet, New York</td>
<td>all or most are trade related</td>
<td>Journal of Food Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Psychology Today, Time, AdAge</td>
<td>Chilton’s Food Engineering, Public Management</td>
<td>Urban Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Journal of Applied Psychology</td>
<td>Journal of Extension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Courtesy: Naomi Lederer, Colorado State University Libraries. [http://libguides.colostate.edu/howtoto/scholarlyvspopular](http://libguides.colostate.edu/howtoto/scholarlyvspopular)