QUICK TIPS: EVALUATING SOURCES

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Once you have identified potential sources of information, you need to be able to select the best material. Here are some things you should keep in mind.

Consider the Source

- For articles, check to see if the publication is peer-reviewed.
- For books, find out if the publisher is a publisher of reputable academic and/or scientific material
- For Web sites, see if the creator or sponsor of the site is an organization or individual considered to be reputable in the field.

Consider the Funding

- See if the research has been paid for in part or in entirety by an individual or organization. If it has, consider whether the source of the funds could have affected the research.

Consider the Author's Credentials

- Find out what credentials the author has. Is s/he an expert in the field? Does s/he have degrees and/or work experience in the specific area in which s/he is writing?

Consider the Documentation

- Does the book, article or Web site document its claims with explicit documentation? It is often a good idea to go to the original source and not rely on a newspaper report when you are doing serious research.

Consider the Timeliness of the Information

- Is the book, article or Web site timely? Has the information contained in it become irrelevant?