

Strategian Evaluating Information

Author/Publisher – Authority/Motive:

- ❖ Who is the author or reporter ... and, who is the author/reporter affiliated with?
 - What expertise does the author/reporter have that lends authority to the information coming from her?
 - What motives might that organization or the author/reporter herself have in presenting information in that particular way?
- ❖ Who published the information?
 - What motives might that publisher have in presenting information in that particular way?
 - What review process, if any, does the publisher go through before accepting and then printing, reporting, or displaying a piece of information?

Date of Publication – Value/Appropriateness:

- ❖ When was the information published or last revised?
- ❖ Is the publication or revision date appropriate for the topic (and, for what you want to do with that topic)?
 - Depending on the topic, how current the information is may be very important. Is a publication or revision date easily found?

Content – Value/Appropriateness:

- ❖ What audience is the information aimed at (scholars in a particular field, academics in general, the "average" person on the street, members of a political party, people of certain ages, undergraduates, children, etc.)?
 - Depending on the audience, the information may be presented very differently (word use, word choice, use of images, use of certain kinds of images, including or leaving out information, etc.).
 - Do you understand the information? If you don't, that information source does not do you much good. Using a more easily-understood (or *secondary*) source first to help you make more sense of the jargon and other information presented in a *primary* source can be very useful and important.

- ❖ **Where did the information come from?**
 - **Is it original peer-reviewed research (primary), an academic review of research done by others (secondary), a less technical overview of a topic (secondary), is it strictly someone's opinion, an analysis of current or past events, does it come from a political party or another organization with strong opinions, is it a mixture of these things, etc.?**
 - **If the publication does promote a distinct point of view (political, religious, other ideological, etc.), is that point of view admitted and explained?**
- ❖ **Does the publication contain a bibliography (of sources from which the information was partly or wholly derived)?**
- ❖ **If the results of original research or the results of a survey/opinion poll are presented, how much information is given about how those results were obtained?**
 - **Are the methods used to obtain those results valid? In the case of an opinion poll or survey, are you told what questions were asked, who was asked, when they were asked, and how they were asked? All these can impact the poll/survey results.**
 - **Have those research or poll/survey results been replicated by others? The results of one poll or survey do not mean much; if multiple polls or surveys return similar results, that may be a real trend.**

Does the Facebook post, tweet, chat, blog, article, book, government document, news program, podcast, Web site, etc. provide answers to the relevant questions above? If not ... *why not?*

If you understand the context in which the information was produced, you can understand the value of the information.

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