The CRAAP Test

Before using any information source, whether it be a book or an article--and especially if it is something from a webpage--you need to make a careful evaluation of it to ensure that the information it contains is reliable and appropriate for your use. The evaluation model we currently use in UCOR 030: The Research and Information Skills Lab is the "CRAAP Test." This model looks at five characteristics of each information source, all of which must be evaluated before you accept a source for use.

Key: * indicates criteria is for Web sources only

CRAAP stands for: Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose

Currency: The timeliness of the information.
  o When was the information published or posted?.
  o Has the information been revised or updated? If so, when?
  o Is the information current or out-of-date for your topic? For some fields, like the humanities, older information sources might be fine.
  o Are the links functional? * If not, this indicates the page has not been updated recently.

Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs.
  o Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
  o Who is the intended audience? The general public or scholars?
  o Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
  o Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use? Do you have the best source(s), or are you just settling for the first five things in your result list?
  o Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?

Authority: The source of the information.
  o Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
  o Are the author's credentials (degrees) or organizational affiliations given?
  o What are the author's credentials (degrees) or organizational affiliations?
  o What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic? Are they an expert in the field? Or do they have life experience that qualifies them? Were they an eye-witness to what they are writing about?
  o Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address? This indicates that they have nothing to hide.
o Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? examples: .com .edu .gov .org .net *

**Accuracy:** The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the informational content.
  o Where does the information come from?
  o Is the information supported by evidence? Is there a bibliography or are sources cited in some way?
  o Has the information been reviewed or refereed? Has it gone through an editorial process? Was it peer-reviewed?
  o Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
  o Does the language or tone seem biased or free of emotion? Ideally, we want to find more objective information sources.
  o Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors? These would indicate an expert did not write it and that it was not reviewed in any way.

**Purpose:** The reason the information exists.
  o What is the purpose of the information? to inform? teach? sell? entertain? persuade?
  o Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear? Or are they trying to sneak something past you?
  o Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda? Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
  o Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases? Again, we are aiming for more objective information sources.

*To sum it all up, if your information source does not pass this test, dump it and try again.*

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