**Questions for evaluating sources**

For online sources, supplement these questions with those for evaluating Web sites and for evaluating social media and multimedia.

**Relevance**

* **Does the source devote some attention to your subject?** Does it focus on your subject or cover it marginally? How does it compare to other sources you’ve found?
* **Is the source appropriately specialized for your needs?** Check the source’s treatment of a topic you know something about, to ensure that it is neither too superficial nor too technical.
* **Is the source up to date enough for your subject?** When was it published? If your subject is current, your sources should be, too.

**Reliability**

* **Where does the source come from?** Did you find it through your library or directly through the Internet? Is it popular or scholarly?
* **Is the author an expert in the field?** Check the author’s credentials in a biography (if the source includes one), in a biographical reference, or by a keyword search of the Web.
* **What is the bias of the source?** How do the author’s ideas relate to those in other sources? What areas does the author emphasize, ignore, or dismiss?
* **Is the source fair, reasonable, and well written?** Does it provide sound reasoning and a fair picture of opposing views? Is the tone calm and objective? Is the source logically organized and error-free?
* **Are the author’s claims well supported?** Does the author provide accurate, relevant, representative, and adequate evidence to back up his or her claims? Does the author cite sources, and if so are they reliable?

**Note** In evaluating sources, you need to consider how they came to you. The sources you find through the library, both in print and on the Web, have been previewed for you by their publishers and by the library’s staff. They still require your critical reading, but you can have some confidence in the information they contain. With online sources you reach directly, however, you cannot assume similar previewing, so your critical reading must be especially rigorous.