Evaluating Sources

The quality of your final research project is related to the quality of the sources you use. As one professor put it, "garbage in, garbage out."   Applying the C.R.A.P. Test is one way to evaluate the quality and value of a source (book, article, website, etc.) *before* you start writing.

Ask yourself these questions to determine if the source is one you should use….

C

Currency

- ❋ How recent is the information?
- ❋ Can you locate a date when the resource was written/created/updated?
- ❋ Based on *your topic*, is this current enough?
- ❋ Why might the date matter for your topic?

R

Reliability

- ❋ What kind of information is included in the resource?
- ❋ Is the content primarily *opinion*?
- ❋ Is the information *balanced* or *biased*?
- ❋ Does the author provide citations & references for quotations & data?

A

Authority

- ❋ Can you determine who the author/creator is?
- ❋ What are their credentials (*education, affiliation, experience, etc.*)?
- ❋ Who is the publisher or sponsor of the work/site?
- ❋ Is this publisher/sponsor reputable?

P

Purpose / Point of View

- ❋ What's the intent of the article (*to persuade you, to sell something, etc.*)?
- ❋ For Web resources, what is the domain (*.edu, .com, etc.*)? How might that influence the purpose/point of view?
- ❋ Are there ads on the Web site or in the resource? How do they relate to the topic being covered (*e.g., an ad for ammunition next to an article about firearm legislation*) ?
- ❋ Is the author presenting fact or opinion?