

## Evaluating Which Books to Use

### **Book Evaluation Checklist** (*can also be used for periodicals*)

Before using information from a book or periodical, it is important to *critically evaluate* the source according to the criteria listed below.

#### *Determine the book's purpose.*

- Is the book written objectively (presenting all sides of an argument) or with a subjective bias (presenting the author's own opinions/views)?
- Why is the author making the argument? Is the author aiming for personal gain or to inform, present opinions, or report research?
- Who is the intended audience?

#### *Identify the author's credentials.*

- Can you identify the author's credentials?
- Does the author teach at a university or have a degree in the area he/she is talking about?
- Has the author published other (well-received) works?
- Does the author work for an organization possibly connected with the issues that the author is writing about?

#### *Identify the publisher.*

- What do you know about the publisher? The book publisher may reveal clues as to the reliability and/or bias of the information presented.
- Does the publisher have a reputation for publishing quality materials?
- Is the book published by an academic institution, large commercial publisher, non-profit organization, small or large business, or alternative-press publisher?
- To locate materials about publishers, look at their websites. Find out what other books they have published and read about their editorial policies.

#### *Consider the authority and sources of the book.*

- Does the book present documented facts or personal opinions?
- Can you determine where/how the author gathered his information: i.e. are there footnotes, bibliographies, or lists of references? Is the book well documented?
- Are those sources from original research, interviews, books or scientific journals? Are they primary or secondary references?

#### *Check the timeliness of the book.*

- When was the material published? Is it outdated?
- Does your research demand a recent book that discusses current research or issues or an older book that discusses the research and issues of a particular historical period?

#### *Consider the type of information contained in the book.*

- Is the information scholarly, popular, governmental or corporate?
- How does the book compare to information you've read in other books and articles? Does it offer multiple positions of your topic?
- Does the information really support your research needs?
- What aspect of your topic does the book not cover?
- Can you use the bibliography or list of works cited to find more information on your topic?