

## How Good *is* That Information?

It has been estimated that the amount of information doubles every 900 days! We need to critically examine sources of information to select the best for our needs. Here are some criteria to help you evaluate print, audiovisual, and electronic information. Feel free to ask one of our librarians for further assistance.

- **Does it contain the specific content that you need?** Valid documents from NASA may not be useful, if you are looking at space travel trends in science fiction.
- **Does it have the features you need**, such as statistical tables, graphs, charts, maps, glossaries, or illustrations?
- **Is the information well-organized**, so that you can easily access what you require? Are you able to retrieve the information through an index, table of contents, links, or other finding aid?
- **Is it suitable for your level of understanding and your needs?** Or is it too simple, or too difficult?
- **Can you identify who wrote or produced the information?** This is usually found in the header or the footer of the item.
- **What are the author's/creator's/producer's credentials?** Does he/she have education, experience, occupation, or publications relevant to the topic? Reference material, such as *Who's Who*, *Contemporary Authors*, or the biographical information in the source itself may help you to determine his/her qualifications to produce work on the topic.
- **Has the author/creator/producer been cited as a reference** in bibliographies on the subject or has he/she published information on the subject in a peer/editorial reviewed source, such as a journal or a publication from a professional association? Checking our periodical databases to see if the author has published other articles is one way to do this.
- **Does the information appear to be valid and make sense?** Is it supported by evidence? Is there adequate documentation of sources, such as a bibliography, footnotes, credits, or quotations?
- **Is the information verified in other sources in the discipline?** Do other books, articles, or documents substantiate the information?
- **When was the source published or revised?** Is it current enough, or doesn't it matter for your topic? Topic areas that are continually changing and rapidly developing, like the sciences, usually demand information that is current. Topics in the humanities, such as literature, art, and history, often require historical sources.