Tips for Evaluating Information

**WHO:** CHECK THE AUTHOR, PUBLISHER, AND/OR SPONSOR

→ Who produced the information?
→ What are the author’s credentials?
→ Who maintains/owns the webpage?
→ Does the webpage have an “About” tab or link?
→ Does the webpage list ways to contact the author or creator of the content?

**WHAT:** CONTEXT OF THE INFORMATION

→ What is the format of the source?
→ Is the source stylistically consistent (font, spacing, etc.)?
→ Is the source well-organized into paragraphs or a logical sequence?
→ Are there numerous sponsored advertisements?
→ How was the information shared or how did you locate it?

**WHEN:** CURRENCY

→ When was the webpage last updated?
→ Does the webpage, book, article have a publication or copyright date?
→ Are the links in the webpage current or broken?
→ Is the information current enough for your topic?

**WHERE:** ORIGIN OF INFORMATION

→ Where does the information come from?
→ Does the webpage cite or link to its sources? Are those sources from reliable or reputable authors or institutions?
→ Does the book or article have a works cited page or bibliography?
→ Is the information on the webpage verifiable in other sources?

**WHY:** PURPOSE

→ Who is the intended audience?
→ What is the purpose of the information?
→ Does the information rely upon facts or opinions?
→ Can you determine a possible bias?
Dig Deeper As You Evaluate – Here are a few more things to think about when you conduct research and evaluate your information.

Pay attention to your own personal bias or reaction.

- **Confirmation bias**: Are you limiting yourself to research that confirms your views?
- **Cognitive dissonance**: Discomfort from opposing perspectives, which leads to becoming more entrenched in your own position/belief.
- **Emotions**: Be wary of Information that feeds into emotions or anger.

Have an eye for details, big and small.

- **Website Domains**: Look for `.com.co` or `.su`, domains popularly used for fake sites. Some fake news websites try to appear legitimate (ABCnews.com.co vs. abcnews.go.com)
- **Typosquatting**: Preying on user types or spelling errors in a URL or accidental uses of the wrong domain (.com instead of .gov)
- **Verified Accounts**: Avoid fake social media accounts. Twitter and Facebook include a blue badge checkmark for verified accounts.
- **Search Results**: Identify sponsored sites that appear as part of your results.
- **Clickbait**: Do catchy or sensationalized titles reflect content?
- **Satire**: Don’t be fooled by humorist sites, such as *The Onion*.

Use Internet tools to your advantage.

- **Google Scholar**: Track citations and discover additional author publications. [https://scholar.google.com](https://scholar.google.com)
- **Google Advanced Search**: Limit search results by site or domain. [https://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en](https://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en)
- **Reverse Image Search Engines**: Check if images are used in their proper context or manipulated.
- **Fact-Checking Websites**: Snopes.com and FactCheck.org help to debunk fake news.
- **Quotes**: Use a search engine to discover if quotes are misattributed, edited, or taken out of context.
- **Internet Archive**: Its Wayback Machine and News Archive help to verify info. [https://archive.org](https://archive.org)

The library is your ally.

- **Librarians**: Any questions about a source’s credibility? Ask a Librarian.
- **Fake News guide**: [https://library.cscc.edu/fakenews](https://library.cscc.edu/fakenews)
- **Bias in the Media guide**: [https://library.cscc.edu/mediabias](https://library.cscc.edu/mediabias)