


Evaluating Resources


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Evaluating Resources



- No matter the type of resource you use, whether it's print or electronic, you want to be sure it's the very best for your purposes.
- There are several factors you may want to consider: purpose, authority, scope, currency, audience, format, objectivity, and navigation or search options.

Purpose



- Consider the purpose of your resource. If it's a "historical novel", while it may be entertaining, it's probably not the best source to use for researching a law review article.
- The purpose of the resource should match your own purpose in using it.

Authority



- If you are relying on a resource for factual information, be sure the resource carries some authority.
- For legal information your best bet is to use a government, or educational resource. Websites include those with a .gov or .edu address.

Scope




- What types of material does the resource cover?
- If you are conducting legal research does the resource cover only statutes, only case law? Is it a secondary source that may discuss both statutes and case law?
- Somewhere in the resource should be a "scope note" that explains its contents.

Currency




- How current is the resource?
- A website should have a date of publication, just like a book does. Look toward the bottom of the page.
- How often is the resource updated? Be sure to check pocket parts or advance sheets for printed material. Also find out, probably in the scope notes or the "about us" section of an online resource, just how frequently they update.


Audience



- Who is the intended audience for the resource?
- While the kids' pages of the Library of Congress website may be a great source of information and they may explain things very clearly, you may not want to cite to them for a scholarly article.




Format



- What type of format is the resource?
- How easy is the resource to use?
- Are you spending more time trying to figure out the presentation of the information than the content?
- Is it a chore to get what you need?

Objectivity



- Who is the author of the resource? Do they have a reason to be biased about the information they are presenting and if so what is it / which way are they biased?
- While .org or .com (or even .gov) websites can be excellent sources of information, always be aware of potential bias when evaluating the information they present.

Navigation or Search Options



- Is the resource easy to use?
- For print resources there should be a thorough and effective index and table of contents. The information should be arranged logically.
- For an electronic resource, there should be both quick search and advanced search options. It is helpful if the information is also arranged topically or chronologically.

Evaluating resources on your OWN...

- We have discussed only a few factors in evaluating information resources.
- Depending on the purpose of your use of resources you may wish to make up your own list of factors to consider and keep it handy for evaluating new resources as you find them.

Contact Us!

Please remember to ask for help whenever you need it.



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