SOURCE EVALUATION

A Quick Guide to CRAAP
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Sometimes, it can be very tricky to figure out if a source is trustworthy & meets your information needs for a given topic. That is why librarians at California State University developed the CRAAP Test, a framework that helps give an overall sense of the reliability of a source (1). Using the concepts of Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose, you can determine if your sources are reliable.

CURRENCY

TO THINK ABOUT A SOURCE'S CURRENCY IS TO THINK ABOUT ITS AGE IN RELATION TO YOUR RESEARCH (2)

Ask Yourself:
- When was this source made/published?
- Are there multiple versions/editions of this source?
- When was this source last updated?
- Does the source have out-of-date information?

RELEVANCE

TO THINK ABOUT RELEVANCE IS TO CONSIDER IF THE SOURCE MEETS YOUR INFORMATION NEEDS

Ask Yourself:
- Is the information in this source relevant to your topic?
- Is the information at your comprehension level?
- Is this source in dialogue with other materials on the same subject?
- Are you confident about using this source in your project?

AUTHORITY

TO THINK ABOUT AUTHORITY IS TO EXAMINE THE CREATOR OF THE SOURCE

Ask Yourself:
- Who is the author/publisher/content creator?
- Does the source creator have appropriate credentials?
- Is the source/ creator of the source affiliated with any organization or group?
- For internet sources, what kind of domain is it? (.edu, .gov, .org, etc.)

ACCURACY

TO THINK ABOUT ACCURACY IS TO DECIDE IF THE INFORMATION IS TRUE & CORRECT

Ask Yourself:
- Does the information in the source match the content of other materials about the same topic?
- Does evidence support the information? Is the evidence adequately cited?
- Are there any obvious spelling or grammar errors?
- What kind of platform is this source coming from? (academic journal, blog post, social media, etc.)

PURPOSE

TO THINK ABOUT PURPOSE IS TO QUESTION WHY THE SOURCE EXISTS

Ask Yourself:
- Why was this source made?
- Are the intentions behind making this source clear?
- Is the source objective or subjective?
- Is the source promoting a certain set of ideologies?

Checklist Approach:

In the checklist approach, you create a literal checklist based on each aspect of CRAAP. While a better strategy for when it is entirely unclear if a source can be trusted, this method tends to be more time-consuming. It is also not useful for thinking critically about the source in relation to other sources. (3)

Holistic Approach:

In this strategy, you pick and choose aspects of CRAAP to both evaluate your source and consider its positionality in your research. You may go beyond the CRAAP framework using other tools like metrics and metadata analysis to read your source latterly in this approach. (4)

Tips & Tools for CRAAP

For Academic Journals:

- Google Scholar (5)
  - Article Metadata
  - Journal Metrics
  - Author Profile
- scimagojr.com
  - Journal Metrics
  - Comparing Journals

For Websites:

- AllSides.com
  - shows how the same news story is covered across the political spectrum
- Wayback Machine
  - shows the evolution of a web address
- Snopes.com:
  - fact checks news stories

For Books:

- Call Numbers (6)
  - Comparing where your books are located in the library can help with questions of relevancy & purpose
- Google Scholar
  - Author profiles may show what other types of books & articles the author(s) have written

For Images:

- Document Analysis (7)
  - meant for primary sources but valuable when dealing with nontext-based materials. See here
- Reverse Google Image Search
  - When in doubt- work backward! See where the image comes from. See how to do this here

(1)Deborah Bernard et al., "The Information Literacy User's Guide | Simple Book Production," accessed March 3, 2021, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-information-lit-user-guide/.
(2) Definitions & questions inspired by: Sarah Kurpiel, "Research Guides: Evaluating Sources: The CRAAP Test," accessed March 7, 2021, https://researchguides.ben.edu/c.php?g=261612&p=2441794.
(3) Jennifer Theissen, Colleen Mackinnon, and Amanda Pemberton, "Beyond CRAAP Critical Thinking in the Age of Fake News," accessed April 11, 2021.
(4) ibid. See also: Allison Faix and Amy Fyn, "Framing Fake News: Misinformation and the ACRL Framework," Portal: Libraries and the Academy 20, no. 3 (July 1, 2020): 495–508.
(5) Thanks to Karen Ayles, "Guides: Metrics and Impact: Journal Metrics," accessed April 11, 2021, https://guides.library.unisa.edu.au/citation_journal_metrics/journalmetrics. for a full overview of using metrics for academic journals.
(6) For using call numbers in the research process see Mary W. George, "Strategy and Tools for Discovery," in The Elements of Library Research, STU-Student edition, What Every Student Needs to Know (Princeton University Press, 2008), 64–89, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt8kf.6.
(7) "Document Analysis Worksheets," National Archives, August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets.