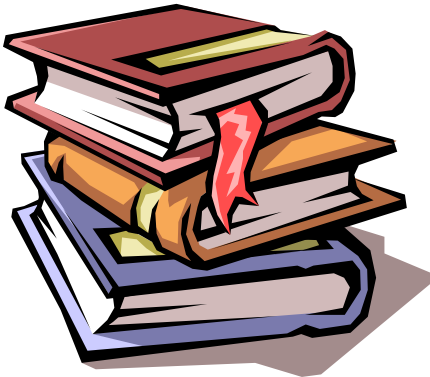


Finding Reputable sources

There are many reputable sources at the Maine West library as well as the local libraries in the community.



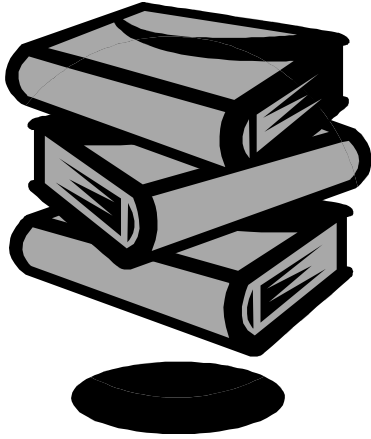
Print Sources:

Books
Magazines
Newspapers
Encyclopedias



Electronic Sources:

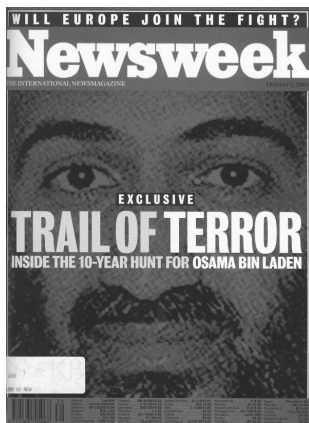
On-line Databases
Encarta Encyclopedia
Other encyclopedias
On-line
World Wide Web



Books



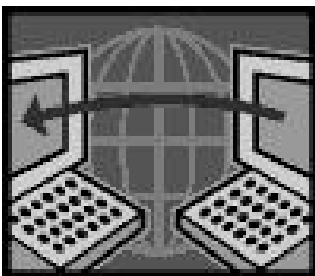
Newspapers



Magazines like Newsweek,
National Geographic,
Time, etc...



Encyclopedias



Internet sources that have
documentation.

Evaluating your sources

Before you use the sources you find you should evaluate the source's usefulness to your research.

Consider –

- **Purpose**
- **Authority**
- **Accuracy**
- **Timeliness**
- **Coverage**
- **Objectivity**



Purpose

Some writers aim to present facts and statistics; other writers argue for particular points of view. Both kinds of sources may be useful for your speech or research paper, but it is important to be able to identify the reason a particular article, book, or Web site was written. Look at the source and ask yourself the following questions about the purpose of the information given:

- Is the author trying to persuade the reader to do something, believe something, or buy something?
- Is the author trying to inform the reader by reporting research results or is the author explaining or describing an event?
- Why was the resource written: to inform, to present opinions, to report research or to sell a product? For what audience is it intended?



Authority



You will need to consider the following questions about the author of your information source:

- Is the author an expert in this field?
- Where is the author employed?
- What else has he or she written?

You will also need to consider the following questions about the publisher:

- Is the publisher well known? (universities, museums, and other educational or research institutions are often reliable publishers)
- Does the publisher stand to benefit from the research or arguments presented in the publication?

Timeliness

Topics, such as the sciences and health sciences, require current information. Other subjects, such as social science or art, value older as well as current material. When assessing the timeliness of your information source, ask the following questions:

- When was the source published?
- Is the source current or out of date for your topic?



Coverage

You will need to assess how well your book, article, or Web site covers what it says it will cover and how well it meets the needs of your research project. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the source cover the topic in depth, partially or is it a broad overview?
- Does the source give historical or theoretical context to information you have found in other sources?
- Can you use the source to support or challenge a position you plan to take in your paper or for your project?
- Is a bibliography or reference list included that can point you to other useful sources?



Accuracy



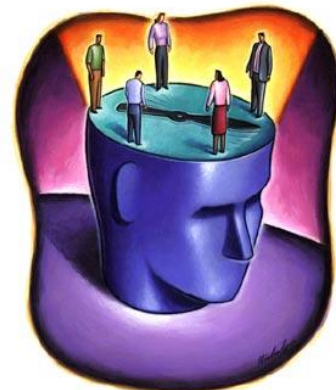
Consider the accuracy of the book, article, or Web site. Look at the source and ask yourself the following questions:

- From what you already know about your topic, does the information seem accurate?
- Did the author follow basic rules of grammar, spelling, and composition?
- Does the information source contain documented facts or statistics? If so, are proper references (in footnotes or bibliographies) given to the original source of information?

Objectivity

You should also consider the objectivity of the book, article, or Web site. Look at the source and ask yourself the following questions:

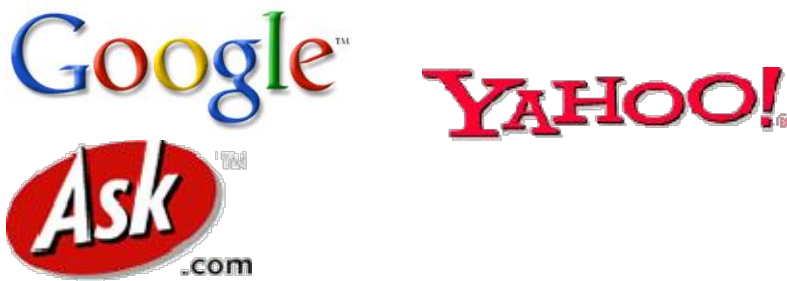
- Does the source present multiple viewpoints?
- Does the information show a minimum of bias?
- Is the source trying to sway an opinion?



Using Search Engines Properly

- What are Search Engines?

Search engines are, in essence, robots that go look in thousands of Web sites for the words you ask them to find. When they find those words, they give you a list of Web sites in order of how frequently those words appear on the Web site. Search engines are free to use and are operated by private companies. The quality varies, depending on how many and which Web sites they will search to find your words. You will want to try a number of different ones and change the ones you use periodically as the companies change their methods.



- How do I use them?

Your success in using search engines depends on 3 things:

1. The search engine you use
2. The way you enter your key words
3. How well you evaluate the information on a site

- How can I best enter key words in a search engine?

Using key words effectively for Web searches requires some understanding of Boolean Logic. Don't get nervous, it is pretty easy to understand.

A Quick Primer in Boolean Logic

Boolean logic simply is a way to link words and phrases together to ensure you get a list of sites that are valuable to you, so you don't waste a lot of time looking at sites that aren't useful.

(For you math fans, it is based on a mathematical logic concept which is related to Set Theory and was developed by French mathematician George Boole.)

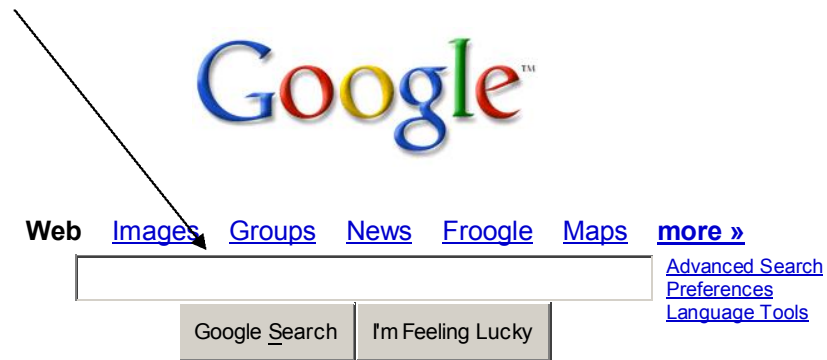
It works like this.

You will use words called *Boolean operators* to link key words and phrases. These Boolean operators are:

AND, OR, and NOT.

When you want 2 or more key words to be searched together as a phrase, you usually must put quotations around that phrase.

example "Harlem Renaissance"



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How can I use these Boolean Operators to make good searches?

It's pretty easy. Just follow these basic guidelines and plug in your own key words.

Is your list of relevant hits too big? To get fewer hits, try one or both of the following:

1. If you are getting too many unwanted hits, limit your search by linking your key words with the phrase **AND** (some search engines use the plus '+' sign instead). This will ensure that the words on either side of the AND are in all of the sites on your hit list.

Example:

If you want AIDS statistics in France, type:

AIDS **AND** France **AND** statistics

or try

AIDS + France + statistics

2. If you are getting sites that include related words that you don't want, use the word **NOT** (some search engines use the minus '-' sign instead) before a word to exclude sites with those words.

Example:

If you want sites on the Renaissance in Europe, but you keep getting sites on the Harlem Renaissance, type:

Renaissance **NOT** Harlem

or try

Renaissance - Harlem

3. Is your hit list is too small, or you get no hits at all? Try using the word **OR** between related words or synonyms.

Example:

AIDS **OR** HIV **AND** France **AND** Statistics

You see that you can combine the Boolean operators into a long string of linked words and phrases. Experiment with this so that you can upgrade your Web searching skills.

