To evaluate a book look for:

- **Purpose:**
  - Inform- such as a sequence of historical events, results of lengthy study or experiment.
  - Persuade- such as change a point of view, believe or behavior.
  - Entertain- such as humor, most fiction, or gossip
  - Teach how to do something- an example could be how to write a resume, business plan, or needlework.
  - Give an overview- an example of this could be a textbook or an encyclopedia

- **Publisher:**
  - Did a University Publish this? Such as Cambridge University Press.
  - Commercial Publisher? There are many reputable publishing companies; however, this does not mean that everything they publish is 100% true. You must also look at the author’s expertise and purpose of the book.
  - Professional or Trade Association, Institution, or Research Center? An example: American Society of Engineers.
  - Government (US, state, local)? Overall these are considered unbiased and impartial. However there are exceptions to this rule.
  - Vanity (self-publisher). Anyone in the U.S. can publish themselves.

- **Organization and Content:**
  - Examine the table of contents to see if the book is organized in a logical and understandable manner.

- **Date of Publication:**
  - Some topics such as health sciences require current information other do not. Is your topic
    - Up-to-date
    - Out-of-date
    - Timeless

- **Authority/Author:** Is the author an expert in this field? Where is the author employed? What else has he or she written? Has he or she won awards or honors in his or her field?

- **Bibliography:** Scholarly works always contain a bibliography of the resources that were consulted. The references in this list should be in sufficient quantity and be appropriate for the content.
  - Make sure the bibliography exists, if it is short or long, is selective or comprehensive.

- **Usefulness:** Is the book relevant to the current research project?

- **Coverage:** Does the book cover the topic comprehensively, partially or is it an overview?

- **Audience:** For what type of reader is the author writing? Is the level of the book appropriate for your needs? Is the book for- general readers, students, specialists in a profession, scholars?
To evaluate an article look for:

**Purpose of the article:**
- Persuade the reader to do something?
- Inform the reader?
- Prove something?

**Type of Journal:** For college-level term papers, information should be mostly obtained from scholarly journals.
- Scholarly Journals contain articles describing high quality research that has been reviewed by experts in the field prior to publication.
- Trade magazines may be useful for some topics—especially economic statistics.
- Popular magazines, such as *Time* and *RollingStone*, should be used sparingly, or not at all.

**Organization and Content:** Is this material organized and focused?

**Bias (of the publisher):** Some publications have an inherent bias that will impact articles printed in them. Is the journal:
- Left/Liberal?
- Right/Conservative?
- Center
- An Alternative Press?
- Strong point-of-view (e.g. religious, anti-medical establishment, pro-military)

**Date of Article:** Some topics, such as those in healthcare need to be as up-to-date as possible.

**Bibliography:** Scholarly works always contain a bibliography of the resources that were consulted. The references in this list should be in sufficient quantity and be appropriate for the content.
- Make sure the bibliography exists, if it is short or long, is selective or comprehensive.

**Usefulness:** Is the article relevant to the current research project?

**Authority:** Is the author an expert in this field? Where is the author employed? What else has he or she written? Has he or she won awards or honors?

**Coverage:** Does the article cover the topic comprehensively, partially, or is it an overview?

**Audience:** For what type of reader is the author writing? Is the level of the book appropriate for your needs? Is the book for general readers, students, specialists in a profession, scholars?

**Illustrations:** Are the charts well organized, clear and professional-looking?
To evaluate a website look for:

- Does the author or organization have the proper experience and qualifications to provide this information?
- If written by an organization, is the organization well known and trusted?
- Does the organization have a positive (altruistic) purpose in providing this information?
- Does the source contain a bibliography or other references to show the source of the information?
- Has this source been through a formal publication process? Has it been edited or reviewed by an expert?
- Does the site contain any bias? If so can you find a way to balance the bias with information from other sources?
- Finally, is it up to date? Is this important/appropriate for your topic?

Information taken from the Colorado State University Libraries website 3/10/09: http://lib.colostate.edu/howto/publr-gov.html