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## PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

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*Primary* sources are the original words of a writer, original creative works, or original historical documents.

*Secondary* sources are works about a person, about his or her work, and books and articles about a topic.

The nature of the source materials is determined by the subject area under study.

	<u>PRIMARY SOURCES</u>	<u>SECONDARY SOURCES</u>
<b>LITERARY TOPICS</b>	novels, poems, plays, short stories, letters, diaries, autobiographies	books about writers and their works, reviews, biographies journal articles
<b>FINE ARTS</b>	films, paintings, music, sculpture, architecture	biographies, critical books about artists and their works, reviews, journal articles
<b>GOVERNMENT POLITICAL SCIENCE HISTORY</b>	speeches, writings by government officials reports of government agencies, treaties, laws court cases, official documents, eye witness accounts	history books, newspaper articles, magazine articles, journal articles
<b>SOCIAL SCIENCES</b>	case studies, findings from surveys and questionnaires reports of social workers	commentary and evaluation in journal articles, reports, newspaper articles and books
<b>BUSINESS</b>	market research and testing statistics, technical studies	newspaper articles, journal and magazine articles, books
<b>SCIENCES</b>	experiments, findings from tests, observations	scientific journal articles, books, magazine articles,

Adapted from: Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. 8th ed. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.




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## WHEN LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

### In Periodical And Newspaper Articles Consider These Things

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Periodical and newspaper articles are important research materials. Periodicals and newspapers contain the most recent information on a subject, cover topics too new or too specific to be covered by books, and give the trend of interest or opinion relating to a current issue or event. Professional periodicals report the latest research and developments in a field of interest. Knowing the characteristics of the major types of periodicals will help you to use these sources more effectively. To locate information in periodicals and newspapers you must use an **index** to locate the specific article title, title of periodical or newspaper, date of the issue, and the page numbers.

**Magazines** are general interest periodicals. They are intended for a popular audience or for the general reader. They are usually easy to read and understand even by a student with no background in the subject. Many of the magazines in the Mountain View Library are indexed in *Readers' Guide* and *Periodical Abstracts*.

FEATURES	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current information</li> <li>• interesting to read</li> <li>• good illustrations</li> <li>• cover very specific topics perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• articles often lack depth</li> <li>• articles not always documented</li> <li>• writers are not always experts</li> <li>• articles frequently lack historical</li> <li>• often focus on opinion more than fact</li> </ul>

**Journals**—often referred to as scholarly journals or professional journals—are specialized periodicals that contain reports of current research, reviews of current research, articles of theoretical discussion, as well as reviews of new books related to a particular field or specialty. Many journals are issued quarterly, whereas many magazines are issued weekly or monthly. Journals are indexed in subject indexes like *Art Index*, *ERIC*, or *Humanities Index*.

FEATURES	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• most recent research</li> <li>• authors are experts in their field</li> <li>• have notes and bibliographies</li> <li>• cover topics in depth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may require an advanced reading level</li> <li>• topics may be specialized</li> <li>• may not be owned by small libraries</li> </ul>

**Newspapers** report general news and events from the world, the region, the state, and the city. Newspapers also contain feature articles and editorials on a variety of topics including lifestyle, health, business, government, entertainment, and social problems. The Mountain View Library subscribes to several newspaper indexes, including: *NewsBank Index*, *Wall Street Journal Ondisc*, and *New York Times Ondisc*.

**FEATURES**

- easy to read
- most recent news
- covers local and regional topics  
not covered in national magazines

**WEAKNESSES**

- articles often lack depth
- authors may not be experts




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## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINION PERIODICALS: Emphases and Biases

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*America*. Although sponsored by the Jesuits, this periodical shows no religious bias. Covers contemporary social, ethical and political questions.

*American Legion*. Provides coverage on topics reflecting a broad spectrum of issues. Conservative.

*American Spectator*. Articles focus on issues of concern to both traditional conservatives and neoconservatives.

*Animals Agenda*. Devoted to articles written from the animal rights perspective. [Alternative Press Index].

*Annals*. Each issue of this highly respected periodical contains ten to twelve excellent articles devoted to a single theme like gun control or housing. Sponsored by the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences which seeks “to gather and present reliable information to assist the public in forming an intelligent and accurate judgment,” *Annals* provides a variety of viewpoints. [SSI]

*Atlantic*. Contains consistently well-written articles on a variety of topics. Liberal.

*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Experts address the “political, ethical and social aspects of nuclear science.”

*Brill's Content*. This magazine focuses critically on issues dealing with the mass media.

*Christian Century*. Presents “a voice of responsible liberal religious views, inclusive of Christian as well as non-Christian.”

*Christianity Today*. Presents the conservative Protestant Christian point of view on current political and social issues.

*Chronicle of Higher Education*. Provides the most complete coverage of the world of higher education in America. [ERIC]

*Commentary*. Sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, this outstanding periodical is a “strategic forum for policy debate on a critical range of issues.” Neoconservative.

*Commonweal*. Although this is a Catholic periodical most articles are nonsectarian and liberal in point of view.

*Congressional Digest*. Each issue is devoted to the pros and cons of one topic of debate in Congress.

NOTE: Mountain View Library may or may not subscribe to the periodicals on this list (check the Mountain View College Periodicals List or the Online Catalog).

- Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report.* Provides thorough, objective reports on developments in politics and government.
- Conservative Chronicle.* A reprint periodical which features some of the best syndicated conservative opinion and commentary. [Not indexed]
- CQ Researcher* Each detailed 6000 word report objectively covers a current topic of interest. This is a good source to help a student select a topic for research. The “At Issue” column covers pros and cons of controversial issues. Bound volumes contain a ten year index.
- Current.* An unbiased reprint periodical which selects articles for originality and relevancy from over 600 publications each month.
- Current History.* Each issue of this journal of contemporary world affairs targets for discussion a single country, region or continent.
- Daedalus.* Each issue of this publication of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is devoted to a theme relevant to contemporary American society. [HI]
- E Magazine.* An independent periodical with articles on a wide range of environmental topics.
- Economist.* An outstanding British newsmagazine which covers economic conditions, current events and politics around the world. Conservative.
- Environment.* Covers environmental problems and solutions.
- Foreign Affairs.* Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations this prestigious periodical presents divergent views on foreign policy issues.
- Foreign Policy.* Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a typical issue contains about a dozen articles on American foreign policy and international relations. [SSI]
- Futurist.* Published by a nonprofit, nonpolitical society, each issue contains provocative articles dealing with all aspects of the future.
- Governing.* Published by Congressional Quarterly, each issue focuses on state, local, and intergovernmental problems and issues.
- Harper's.* Liberal opinion magazine with commentary on contemporary politics, culture and society.
- Humanist.* Focuses on social and moral issues from the humanist viewpoint. Articles are thought-provoking and sometimes controversial. Liberal.
- Issues and Controversies on File.* This digest of news analysis and background information provides an objective presentation of current issues and controversies.
- Maclean's.* Similar to newsweeklies in the United States, this magazine reports the news from a Canadian perspective.
- Mother Jones.* A readable and provocative magazine, supporting social and political reform from a left-of-center perspective.
- Nation.* Features some of the best left-of-center writers of this country. Articles cover social and political issues.

NOTE: Mountain View Library may or may not subscribe to the periodicals on this list (check the Mountain View College Periodicals List or the Online Catalog).

- National Interest*. Readable, provocative foreign policy periodical. Neoconservative. [Public Affairs Information Service, Historical Abstracts]
- National Review*. The best conservative periodical in the U.S. today.
- New American*. The voice of the John Birch Society, this magazine offers a right-of-center view of the world. [Not indexed]
- New Leader*. This bi-weekly newsmagazine offers a variety of opinions and reviews. Liberal.
- New Perspectives Quarterly*. A multidisciplinary, transnational forum of ideas treated with originality, insight, and depth.
- New Republic*. One of the best sources of political commentary. Neoliberal.
- New York Review of Books*. Excellent source of commentary on new books and the ideas they contain. Liberal.
- Newsweek*. One of the three major news weeklies published in the United States, this magazine covers domestic and world affairs from a middle-of-the-road perspective.
- Policy Review*. A major forum for conservative debate on the major political issues of our time.
- Progressive*. Award-winning, highly acclaimed left-of-center periodical.
- Public Interest*. Contains scholarly articles that focus on domestic issues, particularly education, welfare, housing, and poverty. Neoconservative.
- Society*. Prominent authors write on social science and public policy. Focus is on the U.S.
- Texas Observer*. Features investigative reports on social and political issues in Texas. Liberal. [ACCESS]
- Time*. Similar in content and format to the two other major U. S. newsmagazines, this periodical covers the news from a centrist point of view.
- USA Today*. Excellent objective news magazine.
- U. S. News & World Report*. One of the three major newsweeklies published in the United States, this magazine tends to focus on the practical issues associated with current events. Moderately conservative.
- Utne Reader*. Each issue contains 10-15 articles reprinted from mainstream and alternative presses.
- Vital Speeches of the Day*. Each issue contains reprints of 8-10 speeches on vital issues given by leaders of public opinion.
- Washington Monthly*. Articles cover controversial issues and the Washington political scene. Neoliberal.
- World Press Review*. Contains feature stories from foreign newspapers and magazines. Useful for presenting foreign perspectives on U.S. events.

## ✓ IMPORTANT NOTES:

☞ Check the **Mountain View Library Periodical List** to see if we subscribe to a particular title above. If we do not have an article you need, it can be obtained via Inter-campus or Inter-library Loan.

☞ All periodicals are indexed in *Readers' Guide* or *Periodical Abstracts* (unless otherwise noted).

Additional Indexes:

HI = *Humanities Index*.      SSI = *Social Sciences Index*.

ERIC = Educational Resources Information Center. The ERIC database of document citations and abstracts is available free on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.askeric.org/>.




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## TIPS ON EVALUATING SOURCES

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An important aspect of research is careful evaluation and selection of source material. The voluminous amount of books and articles available today makes this task a difficult, albeit an imperative, one. The following “tips” are offered to help you make better critical judgments about your sources.

### 1. Examine the source carefully for the following:

- *TITLE*: Does it identify the scope and purpose of the book?
- *AUTHOR’S CREDENTIALS* for writing this book/article? Biographical dictionaries will identify an author’s qualifications and identify other publications he or she has written. *Who’s Who in America*, *Current Biography*, *Contemporary Authors*, and *Directory of American Scholars* are a few noted biographical dictionaries.
- *PUBLISHER*: Do you recognize the publisher? What bias might the publisher have? Does it publish in a variety of fields? Is it an established publisher with a good reputation?
- *DATE OF PUBLICATION*: Examine the title page and back of the title page (verso) for the copyright date. Up to date information may be critical for your topic.

### 2. Read the preface and introduction carefully for:

- stated purpose or limitations of the work
- further information on the scope of the work
- special features of the work
- comparison with other materials dealing with the same topic

### 3. Ask yourself the following questions about the text of the book or article:

- are the stated objectives met?
- is the writing clear and specific?
- is it a book/article of fact or of opinion?
- what evidence supports the statements and viewpoints of the author?
- can the statements be verified by the reader or others?
- do quoted references have definite citations?
- how objective is the treatment of the subject matter?

- are propaganda devices such as name calling, appeals to the emotions, generalities, or obvious biases regarding nationality, religion, race or sex employed?
  - is there a bibliography? an index?
  - is the source written for a general audience or a specialized one?
4. **Examine book reviews of books you are using as sources.** *Book Review Digest* and *Book Review Index* will identify reviews. Reviews will evaluate the book and will help you determine where an author stands in a range of critical opinion.
  5. **Katz's *Magazines for Libraries*** will help you determine the audience, editorial direction and quality of over 6000 periodical titles. See also the section "Current Events and Opinion Periodicals" on pages 78-81 in this *Handbook*.
  6. **Encyclopedia articles, in general and subject encyclopedias**, often identify major authors in a particular field as well as offer discussions of some of the standard books. Note carefully the bibliography accompanying an article.
  7. **Research guides and bibliographies** on your topic identify major authors and works and often provide evaluative commentary on sources. Consult a reference librarian for assistance in locating pertinent research guides and bibliographies.
- ✓ **Note:** If you are using web pages for information consult "Evaluating Internet Sources" on page 88 of this *Handbook*.




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## HELP IN EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES AND IN WRITING ANNOTATIONS

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The guidelines below were adapted from those developed by the reference librarians at McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire. They will provide you with a systematic way of evaluating most things that you read and will allow you to make a comparison of the critical ideas presented in the sources you locate on your topic.

Another useful aid to reading and evaluating your sources is “Tips on Reading Expository Prose” by Maxine Hairston.

**Ask** yourself these ten questions about each source you locate for your research project. If you are writing an annotated bibliography **answer** these ten questions in your annotation.

1. Who is the author? What is the author’s occupation, position, title, education, experience, etc.? Is the author qualified (or not) to write on the subject?
2. What is the purpose for writing the article/book or doing the research?
3. To what audience is the author writing? Is it intended for the general public, scholars, policy makers, teachers, professionals, practitioners, etc.? Is this reflected in the author’s style of writing or presentation? How so?
4. Is this source
  - a news report,
  - an analysis,
  - an opinion,
  - an overview of the topic,
  - an argument,
  - a commentary,
  - a research report,
  - an in-depth study,
  - a popularly written article/book?
5. Does the author have a bias or make assumptions upon which the rationale of the publication or the research rests?
6. What method of obtaining data or conducting research was employed by the author? Is the article (or book) based on personal opinion or experience,

- interviews, library research, questionnaires, laboratory experiments, case studies, standardized personality tests, etc.?
7. At what conclusions does the author arrive?
  8. Does the author satisfactorily justify the conclusions from the research or experience? Why or why not?
  9. How does this study compare with similar studies? Is it in tune with or in opposition to conventional wisdom, established scholarship, professional practice, government policy, etc.? Are there specific studies, writings, schools of thought, philosophies, etc., with which this one agrees or disagrees and of which one should be aware?
  10. Are there significant attachments or appendixes such as charts, maps, bibliographies, photos, documents, tests, or questionnaires? If not, should there be?

Adapted from:

Engeldinger, Eugene A. "Bibliographic Instruction and Critical Thinking: The Contribution of the Annotated Bibliography." *RQ* 28.2 (1988): 195-202.

- ✓ Notes: James D. Lester addresses the annotated bibliography in his *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*, 10th ed., 2002, available in the Reference Collection as well as the Main Collection for circulation. The annotations on pages 119-120 (7e) of his book can serve as models for your annotations. Additional examples are given below.

Remember to *double-space* your annotated bibliography.

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## SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### Annotated Bibliography

- Blythe, Hal, and Charlie Sweet. "Using Media to Teach English." Instructional Innovator 28 (1983): 22-24. The authors of this journal article argue that teachers should capitalize on the importance of television in children's lives and use it as a tool to enhance live presentation. It is their opinion that teachers should respond to the influence that television has on children by developing a "television consciousness." They suggest that teachers develop teaching methods that include class activities based on television formats and use examples from popular programs to illustrate material being taught.
- Bordeaux, Barbara R., and Garrett Lange. "Children's Reported Investment of Mental Effort When Viewing Television." Communication Research 18.5 (1991): 617-35. The authors of this journal article surveyed children and parents in order to examine the active, conscious cognitive processing of television program information during home viewing by children. They found that the mental effort of children varies as a function of age and type of program being viewed.
- Bryant, Jennings, and Daniel R. Anderson, eds. Children's Understanding of Television: Research on Attitudes and Comprehension. New York: Academic, 1983. This collection of essays presents research contributions on the nature of children's television viewing. Each essay focuses

on the assumptions, methodologies, theories, and major research findings of a specific research program. Topics covered include children's attention to television and how children react, process, recall and learn to watch television. Two essays address the positive aspects of television watching by children. The authors confront critics by explaining the technical skills used in watching television and by discussing how children actively participate in television watching.

French, Judy, and Sally Pena. "Children's Hero Play of the 20th Century: Changes Resulting from Television's Influence." Child Study Journal 21.2 (1991): 79-95. This journal article reports a research project in which adults from the pre-television and post-television eras were surveyed to determine whether the superhero of today's preschoolers differs from those of earlier childhoods. Results revealed significant changes in early childhood in heroes or play themes since the proliferation of television, but no significant change in middle childhood.

Heller, Scott. "Scholars Ponder How to Teach English to Students of a Television Generation." Chronicle of Higher Education 1 July 1987: 9+. This newspaper article reports a meeting of English teachers who expressed concern about teaching students that increasingly expect to be entertained. They suggested a need for changes in educational structure and resources.

☞ Consult Lester's book for additional information on writing annotations.




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## Evaluating Information Found on the World Wide Web

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Print sources (magazine articles, journal articles, books) go through filtering processes like editing and peer review. Information on the World Wide Web, however, is mostly unfiltered. Anyone can put anything they like in their Web documents, so you must evaluate Web sources very carefully before including them in your research. Use the following checklist to help you evaluate the information you find on the World Wide Web:

### ◆ Author

- ✓ Who is the author of the document?
- ✓ Is the author the original creator of the information?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Can't tell \_\_\_
- ✓ Does the author list his or her credentials (occupation, years of experience, position, education)?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- ✓ Do you feel this person is qualified to write on the given topic?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### ◆ Affiliation

- ✓ What institution, company, university, government agency, association, or Internet provider supports this information?
- ✓ Is it an institution that is familiar to you?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- ✓ Does this institution appear to filter (edit or review) the information appearing under its name?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- ✓ Does the author's affiliation with this institution appear to bias the information?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### ◆ Document

- ✓ When was this information created or last updated?
- ✓ What is the intended audience for this information (children, students, professionals, general readers, etc.) ?
- ✓ What is the purpose of the information (i.e., does it inform, persuade, explain, advertise)?

### ◆ Overall Evaluation

- ✓ Considering all of the above points, do you think the information in this document is appropriate for your topic or research needs?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- ✓ Would you recommend this Web site to another person needing the same information?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_