

EVALUATING WEBSITES

Because there is no review process or regulation for the public Web, you will need to judge for yourself the quality of the material you find.

Keep in mind these questions:

Accuracy

- Does the information presented seem accurate?
- Are the facts verifiable?

Authority

- Who is the author?
- What expertise does he or she have on this topic?
- Who sponsors the site?

Objectivity

- What is the stated purpose of the site?
- What position or opinion is presented and does it seem biased?
- What kind of sites does this one link to?

Currency

- On what date was the page created?
- Do you need more current information?
- Do links on the site still connect to their destination?

Use

- Would you quote information from this site in a college research paper?



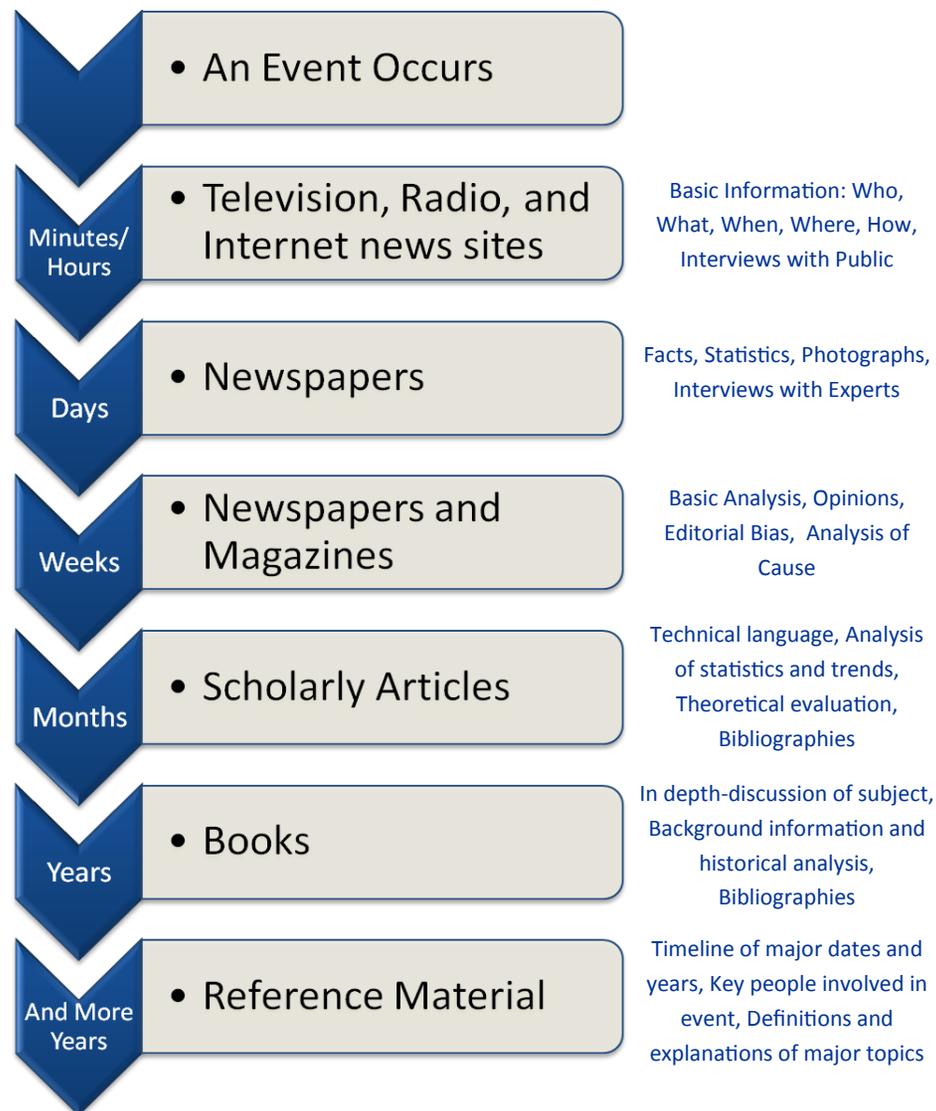
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Selecting the Right Resources

Where's the best place to look for different types of information?

When an event occurs, the information available about that event progresses from the reporting of facts to the publication of scholarly literature. When first learning about a topic you can start and move to any point in the research cycle depending on the type of information you need.



TYPES OF SOURCES

The information you find and use along the cycle of research can be broken down into two basic types of sources: **primary** and **secondary**.

Primary Sources

These are **contemporary accounts** of an event, written by someone who experienced or witnessed the event in question. These **original documents** are not about another document or account.

Includes: *Interviews, Reports, Studies, Creative Works, Speeches, News Footage, Diary Entries*

Secondary Sources

The function of these is to **interpret primary sources**, and so can be described as at least one step removed from the event or phenomenon under review. Secondary source materials, then, interpret, assign values to, conjecture upon, and draw conclusions about the events reported in primary sources.

Includes: *Journal Articles, Editorial Articles, Literary Criticism, Book Reviews, Biographies, Textbooks*

Subject	Primary Source	Secondary Source
Literature	"Song of Myself" (Poem)	Journal article about the poem's historical importance
Psychology	Results of clinical trial to treat ADD by modifying diet	Book about ways to treat childhood ADD without drugs
Politics and Government	U.S. Census Statistics	Book about suburban population changes in U.S.
History	Recorded interview with Choctaw American Indian	Journal article about Native Americans who served in WWII
Social Science	<i>Diary of Anne Frank</i>	Book about diaries kept during the Holocaust
Art	Photographs by Diane Arbus	Magazine article about 20th century female photographers

TYPES OF PERIODICALS

Magazines and journals are called periodicals because they are issued on a regular or "periodic" basis. Periodicals are usually separated into two major groups: **popular magazines** and **scholarly journals**. Once you are able to recognize the differences between a popular and scholarly source, you can focus your research to retrieve only the type of articles you need.

Popular Magazines

- Contain short articles written by various authors in an informal in style.
- Are often unsigned and may exclude a bibliography.
- Usually contain illustrations & advertisements and are printed on glossy paper.
- Often sold at news stores and in bookstores.
- Useful for coverage of current events and popular opinion.
- *Should be used sparingly.* Supplement research in them with material from scholarly journals, books, or other sources of information.
- Many instructors do not allow students to use popular periodicals or will strictly limit their use.



Scholarly Journals

- Are also known as **peer-reviewed** or **refereed** periodicals.
- Publish original research and commentary on current developments within a specific discipline.
- Articles are signed and often lengthy, include minimal illustrations and advertisements, and generally include a bibliography.
- Are usually *peer-reviewed*. This means that articles "must be subjected to a process of critical evaluation by one or more experts on the subject, known as referees."
- Are useful for their original and rigorous approaches to problems by experts in a particular field.
- *Can almost always be used in research.* Consider supplementing such research with books or other sources of information.

