

LIB3 - Information Competency

Assignment 4 - Evaluating information

Purpose

- To use established criteria to critically evaluate information.
- To distinguish between popular and scholarly periodicals.
- To locate and evaluate a discipline-specific scholarly journal, applying evaluation method learned in class.

Instruction

Part I. Books & others

Search Voyager or another library catalog on the topic that you have chosen for the final project. Select three items from the results list (they can be all books or a combination of books, videos, pamphlets, etc.) that you think most likely to provide the information you need and explain why you selected them. The bibliographic record will give sufficient information about each item for you to answer the questions. However, it is best that you come in the library and examine the items. For each item selected, give detailed description of the item and its appropriateness for your topic. Factors that weight in your decision should include:

1. What do you know about the author? Is he a specialist in the field and has written many books? (The catalog will provide links to the author's other books owned by the library, a good indication of the author's authority. *Books in Print*, *Book Review Digest*, *Contemporary Authors* are excellent sources to learn about an author's body of works; search under the author's last name.)
2. What does the subject content of the book tell you about its relevancy for your topic?
3. Can you tell about a book content by its title?
4. Is the publisher a respected and well-known publishing house? (Again, search the library catalog to find out how many books by this publisher currently available in the library collection. Does the publisher produce many books on a certain subject?)
5. Is currency important with this topic and why is it so?
6. Does the item provide credible information or propaganda? (Oftentimes, the cover or the book jacket gives good indication of the nature of a book).

Part II. Periodicals

You will make comparison between a popular magazine and a scholarly journal. The main purpose of this part is to compare the contents (type, length, and quality of articles) and the presentation (type and quality of graphics, advertisements) of the two different types of periodicals.

1. Select one scholarly journal and one popular magazine of your choice. Leaf through the whole issue of each periodical and briefly scan through the articles in both periodicals.
2. Make comparisons by listing characteristics of each periodical. You may create two separate columns, one for each periodical, or you may write a brief review for each periodical. Whatever format you chose, answer the following questions about each periodical:
 - Is information such as expertise and qualifications of the article's author included?
 - What is the nature and the length of most articles?
 - Are there advertisements? What kind and how many?
 - Is there a bibliography at the end of each article?
 - What kinds of graphics (i.e. educational, promotional, or decorative) are included?
 - Discuss similarities and differences between the two publications.

Part III.

1. Consult the Library's *Periodical Directory* to locate a scholarly journal related to your final project's topic. The *Periodical Directory* is available at the Reference Desk and the Periodical Desk at the Library on both campuses. The *Periodical Directory* has a subject list to help you locate a periodical in your field of interest.
2. Choose a scholarly journal in the print version currently subscribed by the Library. A scholarly journal usually has the word "**Journal**" in the title (ex: *Journal of Criminal Justice*). The reference set *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory* (shelved at LAC Reference Desk) gives description about a periodical that help you determine the nature (popular vs. scholarly) of a periodical.
3. Evaluate the journal as a whole entity; a proper evaluation would require reviewing and examining a journal during two years of publication. In your evaluation essay, you must answer the following questions:

(Note: You will find the answers in the beginning page of the journal, and under the heading "*Instruction to Contributors*".)

- What process does the journal follow with regards to accepting articles to be published?
- How much advertising does the journal carry?
- Is the journal a weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly journal?
- What are the types of articles most often included in the journal? (e.g. scholarly lengthy essays, editorials, columns, etc.?)
- Who is the intended audience for this journal?
- Is the journal well indexed? Where is the journal indexed? List two or more publications where the journal is indexed (the reference set *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory* will give this information).