CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SOURCES

No matter where you find information you must determine if it is a credible and reliable source to use for research. Use the following criteria to evaluate:

CURRENCY?
Can you tell how current the information is? When it was last updated?

AUTHORITY?
Who is the author? Is the person an authority in this field? Remember that an author can be an organization, government agency, advocacy group, etc.

ELEVANCY?
Does this piece contribute something unique your paper? Does it offer something that other sources do not? Make sure that it contributes to the overall balance of your paper.

BIASED OR FACTUAL?
Most sites will have some inherent bias. This doesn’t mean you can’t use them – just be aware of the bias, and balance it with more objective, factual pages whenever possible.

CHOLARLY OR POPULAR?
The information may be completely accurate and reliable, but if it was written for a non-scholarly audience, it may not be the best choice for a research paper.

TURN OVER FOR A COMPLETE CARBS CHECKLIST!
CURRENCY:
- Is the information current? ___ YES ___ NO
- Does the site provide information on when it was last updated? ___ YES ___ NO
  
  If YES, when?

AUTHORITY
- Is the site's sponsor identified? ___ YES ___ NO
  
  If YES, who is it?

RELEVANCE/BIAS/SCHOLARLY
- Does the content appear to be accurate? ___ YES ___ NO
- Is the information presented in an objective manner, with a minimum of bias? ___ YES ___ NO
- Is there real depth-of-content (vs. information that is limited and superficial)? ___ YES ___ NO
- Are links from the site appropriate and/or supportive of the content? ___ YES ___ NO
- Does the content have educational or informational value? ___ YES ___ NO

Consider WHERE the web site resides:
- What type of domain is this site?
  __ .gov __ .com __ .edu __ .org __ .net __ .biz Other __________

Consider HOW the main page looks and functions:
- Is the page well organized? ___ YES ___ NO
- Do all of the links work? ___ YES ___ NO
- Is the page free from (excessive amounts of) advertising? ___ YES ___ NO

Consider WHY the web site exists:
- Is the site trying to
  - sell something? ___ YES ___ NO
  - inform? ___ YES ___ NO
  - persuade? ___ YES ___ NO

Total number of YES_________
Total number of NO_________

Does this site pass the CARBS test? Why or why not?