Practice activity: Apply the CRAP test to an academic source

When looking for and choosing sources for our academic work, we need to think critically about the creators of these sources (e.g., their expertise and bias). In addition, we need to evaluate our information resources (i.e., sources) based on our information need and the context in which we will use the information.

The CRAP test can be used to evaluate online information (i.e., websites), but it can also be used to think critically about academic sources that you find in library databases.



You are evaluating an academic source that you find in your search for materials to use for your paper on the impact of environmental change on food security in the Arctic.

For example, go to the Carleton University Library website at www.library.carleton.ca. In the main search field, use the keywords “environmental change” AND Arctic AND “food security”.

Filter your search results using the Peer reviewed journals filter in the left-hand navigation under Availability.

Martha Attridge Bufton
Interdisciplinary Studies Librarian
Carleton University Library 2020

Choose one of the academic articles from the revised list of sources. Let's say you find this article:

Ford, James D. "Vulnerability of Inuit Food Systems to Food Insecurity as a Consequence of Climate Change: a Case Study from Igloolik, Nunavut." Regional Environmental Change 9.2 (2009): 83–100.

(**Note:** Your instructor will share a pdf of this article with you.)

Step I: Evaluate for currency

- Look at the publication date of this academic source.
  - Was this source published in the last five or ten years. If not, when was it published?
  - Does the date of publication determine the relevance of the source for your study of the impact of environmental change on food security in the Arctic? Why or why not (e.g., could the information be outdated?)?

Step II: Evaluate for reliability

Determine if the information of good quality.

- Has it passed through any peer reviewing process? (If your source is an academic journal article, check the editorial policy on the journal website.)
- What sources has the author(s) used (i.e., is there a reference list)?
- If applicable, when were the sources published?

Step III: Evaluate for authority

Determine if the author is credible.

- Who is the author(s)?
- What are their credentials?
- Have they published other materials?
- What is their area of expertise?

Step IV: Evaluate for point of view

Identify the author's perspective or bias.

- What is the purpose of the information?
- What is the author's interest in the topic?

Martha Attridge Bufton
Interdisciplinary Studies Librarian
Carleton University Library 2020

- Is the information relevant to your paper (i.e., does the source provide information related to the impact of environmental change on food security in the Arctic?)

Step V: Reflect

- Does this source pass the CRAP test? Why or why not?
- Do you find it useful to evaluate information using these four criteria? Why or why not?

Martha Attridge Bufton
Interdisciplinary Studies Librarian
Carleton University Library 2020