Evaluating Information Using the CRAAP Test

Welcome to the Johnson and Wales University Library. In this tutorial you will learn how to evaluate information using the CRAAP test.

The CRAAP test was originally developed by the Meriam Library at the Chico campus of California State University. CRAAP is an acronym to help you remember the important criteria for evaluating information. It stands for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose.

Before we discuss the evaluation criteria in more detail, it is important to understand why you should evaluate information.

This is an important step in the resource process but one that is often overlooked. Evaluating resources ensures you are including reliable and relevant information in your assignments.

Because so much information is available today in print and online, it is important to develop the skills needed to filter out extraneous information. This skill is especially important if you are planning to use the internet for research purposes.

Unlike library resources such as books and journal articles, web pages can be published by anyone and often have not been evaluated by scholars, publishers or librarians.

Including irrelevant, dated or incorrect information in your research assignments may have many implications, the least of which may include a poor grade. Let’s look at each of the criteria in more detail now.

The C in CRAAP is for currency. Currency refers to the timeliness of the information. Some written work such as classic literature, are ageless. While others, like technological news are outdated quickly.

To determine currency ask yourself, when was the source written or published? Has the information been updated more recently? Is the information current or out of date for your topic? When evaluating a website, are the links functional? If not, this may be a sign that the site is no longer being updated or maintained.

The R in CRAAP is for relevance. Relevance refers to the importance of the information to your specific research needs.

To determine relevancy ask yourself, is the information relevant to your question or topic? To what extent does the information answer your research question? Does it cover your topic comprehensively or focus on only one aspect? Who is the intended audience of the publication? Is the information at an
appropriate level for your needs? Meaning that the content is neither too elementary, nor too advanced.

The first A in CRAAP is for Authority. Authority refers to the source or the author of the information. Determining the author for a source is important in deciding whether the information is credible. The author should show some evidence of being knowledgeable, reliable and truthful.

To determine the author’s authority or credibility ask yourself, who is the author? Is it a person, company, or organization? Does the source provide any information that leads you to believe the author is an expert on the topic? For example, can you find information about the author’s education, experience or other publications the author has written on the topic? Is contact information such as a publisher or an email address listed on the source? If you are evaluating a website does the URL reveal anything about the author? For example a .com site indicates the site may be used for commercial purposes, whereas a .gov site indicates the information is being derived from a government agency.

The second A in CRAAP is for accuracy. Accuracy refers to the reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the information.

To determine accuracy ask yourself, based on your knowledge does the information seem accurate? Is the information supported by evidence? Can you verify any of the information in another source? Has the information been peer reviewed? Does the language or tone seem unbiased? Are there spelling, grammar or other typographical errors?

The last letter in CRAAP is P for Purpose. Purpose refers to the reason or motivation for the information to exist. Knowing this is instrumental in determining if the information presented is objective or biased.

To determine the purpose ask yourself, what is the intention of the source? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade? Does the author make his or her intentions clear? Does the point of view appear to be objective and impartial? Are their political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases? And finally who is the intended audience?

Let’s review what we have learned in this tutorial. The CRAAP test is a method for evaluating information sources. Evaluating sources is an important part of the research process because it ensures you will be including only the most reliable and relevant information in your assignments.

CRAAP is an acronym that stands for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose. Using this criteria you should carefully weigh each source you are considering using for your research. If at any time you doubt the credibility of the source and think the information may be a load of crap, you should not use it.

If you still need help evaluating information, assistance is available in person, on the phone, via e-mail, or chat. Go to the library.jwu.edu website and click on the link for your campus for more information. For online only students please refer to the Providence campus.

This tutorial was brought you by Johnson and Wales University Library.