Tips for Evaluating Sources

- **Quick Look**
  - **Author Presence/authority** - Author listed? Author’s credentials? Author cited by other researchers?
  - **Sponsor/publisher** - Who’s the sponsor/publisher? Are they well known? What do they do or represent?
  - **Currency** - When was this source published? If it’s a website, when was it last updated?
  - **Cited sources** - Are references included? How many? Are they authoritative? Only self-citations?
  - **Type of venue** - Scholarly or popular? What type of ads, if any? Well organized or cluttered?

- **Content Analysis**
  - **Intended audience** - Children vs. adults? Consumers vs. academics? General vs. specialized group?
  - **Intended purpose** - Why is author addressing this audience? Commercial or other benefits to author?
  - **Coverage** - Is the source detailed or very brief? Are both sides of the issue addressed?
  - **Treatment and tone** - What language is used? Calm and detached or exaggerated and emotional?
  - **Confirmation from other sources** - Does this source validate or contradict other sources?

Evaluation Tools

- **Ulrichsweb** [http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/ulrichsweb](http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/ulrichsweb)
  - Useful to determine peer review status (referee symbol next to journal name)
  - Lists intended audience and content level

Some Useful Databases in the Biological Sciences

- **Web of Science** [http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/web-science-is](http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/web-science-is)
  - Interdisciplinary database with over 9,300 journals. Good for any science topic.
- **Ecology Abstracts (ProQuest)** [http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/ecology-abstracts](http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/ecology-abstracts)
  - Focuses on how organisms of all kinds interact with their environments and with other organisms.
- **Scopus** [http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/scopus](http://dbs.lib.byu.edu/scopus)
  - Covers the world’s research in science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and arts & humanities.

Searching Journal Article Databases

- Identify key terms for your search topic
- Select appropriate search fields for your terms
- Use Boolean Operators (AND, OR, NOT) to broaden or narrow your search
  - **AND** is used to narrow your search and combines two or more search topics
  - **OR** is used to broaden your search to search for synonyms or similar concepts
  - **NOT** is used to eliminate unwanted search results
- To include all variants of a word in your search, truncate terms by placing an asterisk (*) after the common root
  - i.e., vaccin* would search for vaccine, vaccines, vaccination, vaccinated, etc.
  - Use caution, as some truncation can result in unwanted results
- Put quotations “ ” around two or more words to limit search results to a specific phrase
- For more help with search strategies, check out the following tutorial: [http://youtu.be/K5QlCugNCVM](http://youtu.be/K5QlCugNCVM)