Overview:

Today we’re looking at different types of sources you will encounter in your research. I’ll discuss how to identify the type of resource, and how to determine if that type is appropriate for your research.

When looking at resources, think about the:

**P**rocess- is there a process for editing or formally reviewing information?

**E**xpertise- does the author hold a degree or have extensive experience in the field?

**A**im- what is this resource trying to accomplish? Does the author or publisher have interests that could sway how or which information is presented?

Here’s some information to help you determine if a source is more popular or more scholarly.

Popular resources are written for the public, so accessible language and ease of access are good indicators. (See p. 92)

Here are some examples of popular sources you may encounter:

Blogs

Blogs generally represent an individual’s opinions. Anyone is able to write a blog, and they do not go through a review or fact-checking process. Try to identify who the author is, if they have any expertise on the subject, and look at the content of any external links they provide.

Books (Popular)

This book represents popular literature. There was selection of storytellers and an editing process, but little research. You might be able to identify the subject, or verify information, but for your assignment these texts are generally for emphasis or emotional appeal.

Newspapers/Outlets

Newspapers or news outlets relay current information. Each news outlet has designated editing staff, and journalists are expected to report ethically and factually.

Scholarly sources are geared towards researchers or academics, may charge for access, and usually present new research, theories, or review of past research. (See p. 93) Sources generally considered scholarly include the following

Reference Materials

Reference materials, like the encyclopedia shown, give background information, overviews of a topic, and can point you towards notable authors, texts, or studies. They are generally not cited in reference lists.

Data & Statistics

Data sets are available for your own analysis and interpretation, while statistics provide a summary of the data. Government websites and publications are usually the go-to for data and statistics. The resources available to the federal government allow for greater data collection than individual researchers.

Academic Journal Articles

Academic journal articles are published in peer-reviewed journals (See p. 94-95), and are what instructors expect from you when they require an academic or scholarly source. They present original research, and usually have an abstract, literature review, in-line citations, and a reference section.

GRAY ZONE

While some categories are more clearly identified as “popular” or “scholarly,” many could be either. While the book example shown in this video is considered “popular”, many are written by and for scholars. Similarly, reference materials relay important facts and research,, but typically are not used by researchers.. Another source are trade journals, which effectively serve as academic journals for related professions. Government information will also fall under this category much of the time, because it is produced for the general populace, but also exhibits expertise and review processes.

CITATIONS

Most, if not all, of these resources can now be accessed online, but remember that doesn’t necessarily mean they are “websites” Consult the most recent style guide for your discipline to help you identify major components of citations for different types of sources.

Thank you for watching- we hope this overview helps you better identify sources for your research assignments. For more detailed explanations, see chapter 7 of Writing Critically. You can also contact NDSU Librarians through the reference chat on the Libraries website, or set up a consultation with your subject librarian.