Standards for Evaluating Resources for Citations

How do you evaluate the authority and appropriateness of resources, including books, articles, and Websites?

**Suitability**
- **Scope** – Does the breadth of the source match the nature of the author’s topic?
- **Audience** – Does the resource fit? Too technical or not technical enough? Too basic or too advanced?

**Authority** – Can the author be identified? What are the credentials? Is the author cited elsewhere? Are links to the author in other trusted sources?

**Publishing Body** – Was there a peer review process? Is the organization recognized in the field of study? Is the document prepared as part of the author’s professional duties and expertise?

**Currency** – Is the information dated? If currency isn’t an issue, authorship or place in the historical record is important. Is a date of copyright included? The nature of the topic will determine whether or not dated information is too old.

**Other indicators**
- **Documentation** – Are citations used to authenticate the information?
- **Objectivity** – What is the point of view? Editorial? Research-based? Advocacy of a product or philosophy?
- **Primary vs. secondary source** – What is the nature of the source? Primary sources are preferred; on occasion primary sources are not available. Secondary sources are of value in pointing to primary sources. Because secondary sources are interpretations, they should be validated by consulting the primary sources.
- **Websites** – These pose a unique challenge in determining appropriateness of the source.
  - Has the author and title of article or database cited? Are the credentials cited? The reference must include all of this information in addition to the URL.
  - Does a group or organization sponsor the site? Read “About Us” to determine the philosophy and nature of the sponsor.
  - Is there a bias evident?
  - Is there a copyright date on the site? Is the site sufficiently up-to-date? Undated factual or statistical information should never be used; other materials, if not dated, should indicate source so credibility can be judged.
  - How credible and authentic are the links to other resources?

**Kappa Omicron Nu Guidelines**
- Wikipedia is not an acceptable citation, although this source may lead to an appropriate one.
- If a citation is not a known long-lived file, authors shall archive URL citations through [http://www.webcitation.org](http://www.webcitation.org) before submitting manuscripts for publication.
- Authors shall ascertain the credibility of the electronic citation—ensuring that the author, credentials, and publication date are available—before choosing to archive the reference.
