Critically Evaluating Resources

This brief guide is aimed at helping you to critically evaluate resources. These are just some of the questions that you can ask yourself when evaluating the information you find.

Why?
Why was this research or work created?
Is it to inform, educate or persuade?
Is this work original?
Does it extend current knowledge?

Who?
Who is the author? Is (s)he known and respected in the field? Do they have academic status such as Doctor or Professor?
Who is the publisher? Are they commercial, trade or professional?
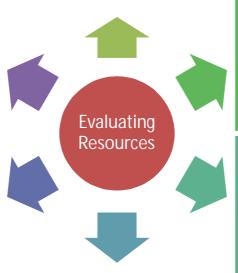Who is the intended audience - public, academic, professional?

When?
When was the information published? Is it up-to-date?
Does it discuss current issues and perspectives?
Is the date of the material relevant to your needs? Some subjects require the most current information, whereas an assignment with an historical context will need both new and old information.

Evaluating Resources

What?
What have you been asked to find? Is a particular source, such as an article, appropriate?
Is the content appropriate? Is it too basic, too complex, too practical, or too theoretical?
What type(s) of evidence does the author use? Articles, scientific studies, their own research?
What methodological problems may be present? What are the implications of these?

Where?
Where was it researched/written? This can influence its style and argument.
Where are you researching? E.g. if you are looking at the U.K., is material from India appropriate?
Where did you find your information? Is it a reliable source?

How?
How was the research conducted? Is the information well-researched?
Are there clear research goals and have they been achieved?
Does the author exhibit bias or make certain assumptions?
Is the argument logical, well-structured, with correct spelling and grammar?
Is this work consistent with other work in the field? Are there any inconsistencies or contradictions?

Remember: **Currency**, **Accuracy** and **Relevancy** (C.A.R.)