HOW TO EVALUATE INFORMATION (IN FOUR QUESTIONS)

WHO IS THE AUTHOR?
See if you can describe what experience, credentials, and qualifications the author brings to the topic.

WHO IS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE?
In asking this question you will investigate what the purpose of the information is.
Advice to examine domain suffixes (.gov, .edu, .com, .org) is often too simplistic for the modern web.
Asking broader questions about who might read the website in question will require reflection and critical thinking.

HOW RECENT IS IT?
Don’t use outdated information unless you have a good reason to.
In most cases you will need to use information less than 3-5 years old.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNALS THAT ACCURACY MATTERED IN THE PUBLICATION PROCESS?
If you learn to look for evidence of quality control, you will find that good publishers tend to offer details about their standards and practices.
The peer review process for scholarly journal articles is a well known standard for vetting academic information.

ALL ABOUT PUBLISHING

QUALITY CONTROL
Publishers are individuals or organizations that produce and distribute information.
If you recognize the name of a given publisher, that might indicate that they have developed a reputation over many years for the quality of their information.

DISTRIBUTION
The world wide web was invented in 1989 by a physicist who wanted to improve communication between scholars using the Internet. Before 1989, publishing was limited to those who had access to the many resources that are necessary to publish in print.
Now, anyone can be a publisher through creating a website or otherwise distributing information online. The Internet has forever changed publishing.

WHAT METHODS DO PUBLISHERS USE?
Editors work with authors to make sure the information presented is accurate and aligns with the purpose of the project.
To ensure accuracy, many publishers employ fact checkers who work independently from authors and editors.
If the publication is scholarly, then the editor, as well as the author, will usually have academic credentials.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING?
Many publishers who were successful when print was dominant, have now begun to publish in electronic formats as well as print.
Publishers will need to be more strategic, since the Internet has expanded the marketplace.
The public will need to develop sophisticated information literacy skills in order to distinguish high quality information from misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation that is also available on the Internet.

It’s ok to ASK for help!
Visit libraries.uark.edu/help for 24-7 assistance.