

# Basic Reference Sources (LIS-5104)

(Evaluation of Reference Sources)

Course Instructor:

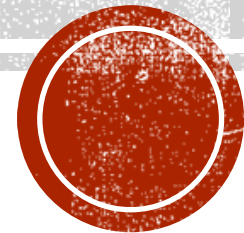
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# Evaluating information sources



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: introduction

- A systematic determination of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards.
- Evaluation can assist an organization, program, project or any other intervention or initiative to assess any aim, realisable concept/proposal, or any alternative, to help in decision making, or to ascertain the degree of achievement or value in regard to the aim and objectives and results of any such action that has been completed.



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: introduction

- Reference librarians are responsible for building reference collection of the library.
- They have to be very careful and vigilant in selecting and acquiring reference books.
- The reference librarian must be guided by certain indicators in the selection and acquisition of reference sources.



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- Unlike non-fiction and fiction books, reference sources are very expensive and must be evaluated before a library acquires them.
- Some of the criteria listed by Katz (1997) include:

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- Authority

- Treatment

- Revision

- Arrangement

- Format

- Scope

- Currency

- Audience

- Recency

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# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Authority of the Compiler/ Publisher**
  - The authoritativeness of a reference book is judged on the basis of qualification, experience and reputation of the sponsoring body (if any), publisher, distributor, author(s), editor(s), and compilers.
  - ***Authorship***: what are the qualifications, experience and education of the author, authors, contributors, and editors by reputation and as revealed in previous works?



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Authority of the Compiler/ Publisher**
  - *Auspices*: what is the reputation of the publisher or the sponsoring agency?
  - *Genealogy*: is the work new? If it is based on previous publication, what is the extent of the revision?
  - One must ensure that the compilers/publisher have the required expertise in the field of coverage.





# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

## ■ Treatment

- Refers to the thoroughness, reliability and completeness of the information, i.e., the facts, statistics, place names, names of person, names of organisations, background details etc.
- It also includes the category of users for which the book has been written either for scholars or laymen, adult or children.
- **Accuracy**: how thorough, reliable and complete are the facts?
- **Objectivity**: is there any bias and controversial issues?





# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Treatment**

- *Style*: is the writing level that of the layman or the scholar, adult, or child?

- **Revision**

- The reference sources must be regularly revised, through the new publications or supplementary.
- Supplements provide a summary of the major events that happened in the previous year.



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

## ■ Arrangement

- How easily and quickly information could be located in the work.
- The arrangement of the main text can be classified or chronological or alphabetical or some other way.
- The arrangement should be logical and easily understood by a lay reader.
  - *Sequence*: does the sequence of content follow classified, chronologic, geographic, tabular or alphabetic order?
  - *Indexing*: is the main text arrangement adequately complemented by indexes and cross references.



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

## ■ Format

- Refers to binding, quality of paper, typefaces, page make up, illustrations, diagrams, maps, etc.
- The minimum standards must be met.
- The encyclopaedia should be well-illustrated, good aesthetic, etc.
  - *Physical make-up*: do binding, paper, type and layout meet minimum specifications?
  - *Illustrations*: are the illustrations of good quality, are they of real significance and are they directly related to the text?



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

## ■ Scope

- Covers the purpose of the work as stated by the editor and how that purpose is fulfilled in the main work, the constancy in following the defined plan.
- also includes the limitations of the work in regard to subject, class of readers, up to datedness of material and overall coverage.
  - *Purpose*: to what extent is the statement of purpose in the preface fulfilled in the text?



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Scope** (continue...)
  - *Coverage*: how up to date is the material? Are all of the articles and bibliographies as recent as the last copyright date?
  - *Bibliographies*: to what extent do the bibliographies indicate scholarship and send user on to additional information?



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Currency and Recency**

- An important factor while evaluating a reference source.
- How up to date is the material? Are all of the articles and bibliographies as recent as the last copyright date?
- A dated reference source may not serve a useful purpose.



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Audience**

- The audience of the reference source must be clearly stated.
- From the table of contents, it must show that the audience claimed by the compilers is correct.





# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Special features and drawbacks**
  - *Distinction*: what features distinguishes this information source (reference book) from all others?
  - *Comparative values*: how does the work compare to similar titles? Reviews: are they favourable?
  - *Cost*: factor that must be considered by a reference librarian.
  - The bibliographies must be up to date and useful.



# Evaluation of Reference Sources: criteria

- **Special features and drawbacks** (continue...)
  - Similarly, the format is important
  - A hard cover reference source is preferred to a paper cover.
  - The reference source should be well-arranged so that users can easily access any topic of interest.
  - ***Bibliographies***: to what extent do the bibliographies indicate scholarship and send the user on to additional information?



# Evaluating Internet Information

- Depends on what one is using the information for.
- It is essential that one judiciously selects what information will be useful from the Internet.
- The following guidelines will assist one in evaluation of Internet information:

- |                       |              |            |                 |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| • Information sources | • Authorship | • Accuracy | • Verifiability |
| • Consistency of data | • Currency   | • Quality  |                 |



# Conclusion

- Evaluation is a systematic determination of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards.
- Evaluation of reference sources helps to determine the quality usefulness and target audience.

