CARP Criteria

I'm an awesome carp!

for Source Evaluation

Image source: http://circlelake.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Common-carp-Pat-Tully1.jpg
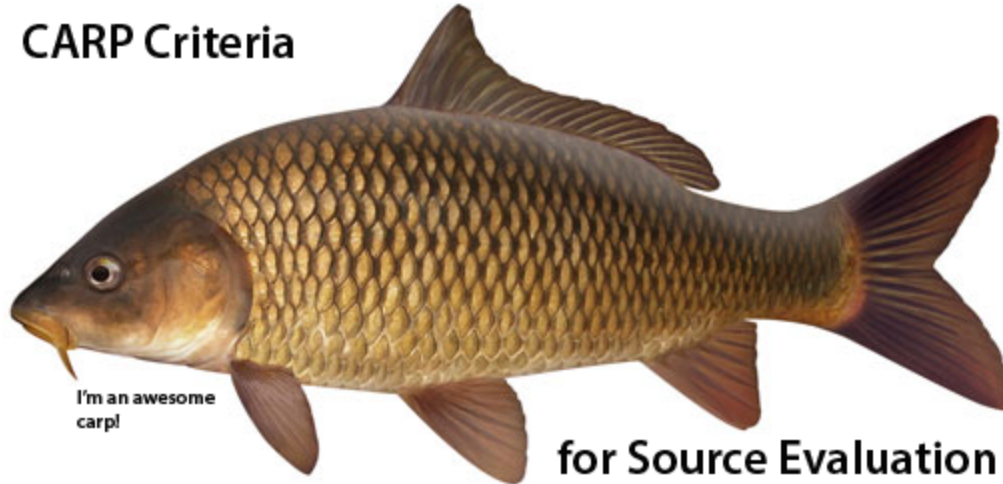Modified by Denise Cote, College of DuPage Library

The CARP technique can help you critically evaluate your information sources. The CARP criteria is used to evaluate web resources, but you can use it on books, journals, and other information sources too.

Evaluation Criteria	Prompts	Reasoning
Currency		
	When was the article/site published? Is there a date available on the site somewhere? (published or copyright) Is the timeliness of the information important for your use?	Knowing when an article was published is important if only to put it into historical context. For instance, if you are researching a topic that is constantly changing, like technology or current events, you'd want the latest info. For factual information, like for your plant research, older materials should be ok because the basic characteristics of plants do not change, and confirming facts across sources helps too. Having material with a date of authorship is preferable, but not absolutely

		necessary if the source passes muster in the other criteria.
Authority		
	Who is the author of the article/website? What are their credentials? Why would you trust his/her information? Who is the owner/sponsor of the website?	Try to use materials authored by people who have credentials or expertise in the field that they are writing about. The author should have a degree, some proven expertise in the field. It might be they've owned a business for a long time, or have a name in their trade. Look for other materials published by the author. If they haven't written a lot about your subject then be wary of their authority on the subject.
Audience		
	Who is the audience? Who are they writing this for? Is it for professionals or the average consumer?	This one is pretty straightforward. Is the information intended for people who do not have expertise in the field? Look at the terminology used in the article/on the website.
Reliability		
	Does the site use references to other materials? Is the author a reliable source? Would you use the website for other information needs later (did you bookmark it?)	This one goes hand-in-hand with Authority. Look for a list of references or links to other sites that can help to verify the information. Perhaps you've found that other sources refer to the one you are evaluating. This is a good sign of reliability.

Relevance		
	Does the terminology used in the article/site relate to your research? Is it at a professional or consumer level? Be honest: Does the material really address your information need?	This one goes with Audience and Reliability. When you have your topic in mind while you review the site, are you struggling to see how the site goes with your research? If so, question its relevance to your topic.. The material may be credible and reliable, but it might not suit your information need. Do not try to force information sources to work for you.
Purpose &/or Point of View		
	What is the article/website's purpose? What is their point of view? Are they trying to teach you or sell you something? Is the author trying to persuade you? Is their information one-sided? Watch for bias.	This one often takes the most effort to determine. If you are actively skeptical when you review for purpose/POV, you'll find yourself questioning the overall purpose of the source through deeper reading. If the author is not clearly stating his/her reasons for writing the piece/developing the website, then you might want to look for bias which can sometimes be very vague or seem hidden. Sometimes the purpose of the source is to just inform, to report facts. If this is the case, then your skepticism should guide you to confirm those facts using a few other sources.