

4.6.8: CRAAP Analysis

Learning Objectives

Describe the components of the CRAAP analysis process

There are several tools available when evaluating sources. Perhaps the most common and well known is the (well-titled) CRAAP Analysis. The University of Santa Cruz library has a [full breakdown of the CRAAP method](#). Below is a summarized form; CRAAP stands for:

- **Currency:** How current is the source?
- **Reliability:** How important is the information, and has it been consistently presented?
- **Authority:** What is the source of the information?
- **Accuracy:** Judged against other sources (which themselves will need appropriate evaluation), how correct is the source?
- **Purpose:** What is the goal of the source—why was it created?

Lastly, Flinders University has an excellent commentary below on the use of Wikipedia. Depending on your organizational culture, Wikipedia might be sufficient as a source. This is hotly debated, but it all depends on the purpose of your writing. Not all of your business reports need to be lengthy and high caliber items supported by scholarly sources; you might find yourself writing a “quick” report within a day or two where your boss indicates that Wikipedia or some other introductory website (and encyclopedia maybe) is sufficient. It is important to point out that the report, while important, is not the end, it simply a means to making better decisions. Direction from your organization’s decision-makers is key. Flinder’s comments:^[1]

A note on Wikipedia. While you certainly would not cite a Wikipedia article as a credible source in your essay, Wikipedia can be a great place to start to get an understanding of a topic. It may also lead you to relevant, high quality resources. Try looking at the references for a Wikipedia page (at the bottom of each Wikipedia page) and assess the quality of the references you find. Many Wikipedia entries will cite scholarly resources (including books and journal articles) in their references, which if appropriate, can then be cited in your essay.

The Human Fund

If we return to Martha’s project, we can imagine her running each secondary source through a CRAAP analysis. Her sources are likely to be a mix of books, magazine articles, videos and other media. When considering what might make for a good source for Martha, we might use a reverse version the CRAAP analysis to illustrate her analysis:

Currency

How current is the source?

Martha is not likely to use anything older than 3 to 5 years. There is no hard-and-fast rule here, but civic politics, dynamic life, technology and other features of human experience are likely to render anything too much older than 5 years less helpful.

Reliability

How important is the information, and has it been consistently presented?

Martha is likely to read or watch materials that are professionally put together and have a linked look and feel to the material.

Authority

What is the source of the information?

Martha is likely to look at sources that have a reputation of doing work in the homeless community or have done good work in other similar areas of social work.

Accuracy

Judged against other sources (which themselves will need appropriate evaluation), how correct is the source?

The bottom line here is whether the material has been reviewed by other experts. For scholarly work, we refer to this as “peer-reviewed.” Clearly not all of Martha’s sources need to be peer-reviewed; however, the more of her sources that are, the better

her information will be. Flinders University recommends asking the following questions:^[2]

- Is it scholarly?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Is that evidence referenced by the source?
- Has the content been peer-reviewed or edited by a publisher?
- Can the information be verified by other literature on the same topic?
- Is the tone objective and impartial?
- Is it free from obvious errors such as spelling or grammar?
- Is it written by a scholar with expertise in the field?

Purpose

What is the goal of the source—why was it created?

This is where intention and bias are more clear. For professional scholarly work, you will often see a note at the end of the document indicating any funding or entities that supported the work. This is there to inform the reader of external influences on the material. A professional author will work to limit his or her bias, or they will use an alternative technique, which is to discuss their bias in their work, and make their agenda clear to the reader.

1. Flinders University. "Evaluating your source." Web. flinders.libguides.com/evaluate. 18 June 2018.
2. Ibid.

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