

## QUALITY OF SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

### Sources That Are Likely to Be of Higher Quality:

- **Books**
- **Periodicals**—can be found through library databases such as Lexis-Nexis and ABI/Inform
  - **General news** (Note: These sources are sometimes available online and it is fine to use any online version).
    - **Newspapers**—e.g., *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*
    - **Magazines**
      - **Business oriented**—e.g., *Business Week*, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *American Demographics*.
      - **General**—e.g., *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Economist*
      - **Specialty magazines**—if appropriate and relevant—e.g., *PC Magazine*
    - **Trade publications**—e.g., *Air Cargo World*, *Ice Cream Reporter*
- **Reference materials published by a reputable source—if relevant and appropriate**—e.g., encyclopedias and almanacs
- **Directories**—e.g., *Best Customers*
- **Government publications**—e.g., *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*
- **Selected web sites from credible sources:** U.S. Government, United Nations, World Bank. (Note: Most other web sites are not appropriate).

### Sources That Are Likely to Be of Low Quality and/or to Be “Suspect” in Some Way:

- **Most web sites:**
  - **Private sites.** The person who wrote this may not be qualified to discuss this issue, may have done a sloppy job, or may have a special interest. This includes sites hosted on “.edu” domains unless the writer is clearly identified as a professor or researcher. If the source is credible this way, you must identify this fact in the citation.
  - **Company sites.** These are glorified advertisements for the firm and are intended to make the firm look good. Accuracy may be less important to the firm than coming across well!
  - **Trade group sites.** These are supposed to make the industry look good. See above!
  - **Foreign government sites.** Many of these are intended to make the firm look good. Some countries do not have the resources to collect accurate information. Much of the information contained may represent wishful thinking rather than reality.
  - **Political, social, or organizational sites.** Sites run by religious groups, social or ethnic groups, political groups, or other groups that exist to promote one kind of viewpoint, policy, or “truth” cannot be taken at face value.
- **Company advertisements and annual reports.** Selected objective and audited information may be useful, but management opinions and claims are suspect.
- **Trade group brochures.** Again, the publisher has an agenda!

Yes, it is easier to try to find things through search engines such as Google rather than consulting a reputable source. It is also easier to guess! Neither approach is acceptable.