The amount of information out there on any given subject can be overwhelming and confusing. This handout provides a list of common types of sources and what information you can discover from each.

**Traditional Print Sources**

**Books & Textbooks:** Books come in a multitude of topics. Because of the time it takes to publish a book, books usually contain more dated information than will be found in journals and newspapers. Acceptable for all research projects.

**Newspapers:** Predominately covering the latest events and trends, newspapers contain very up-to-date information. Newspapers report both information that is factual in nature and also share opinions.

Generally, however, they will not take a “big picture” approach or contain information about larger trends. Acceptable for all research projects.

**Academic and Trade Journals:** Academic and trade journals are where to find the most up-to-date information and research in industry, business, and academia. Journal articles come in several forms, including literature reviews which overview about current and past research, articles on theories and history, or articles on specific processes or research. Acceptable for all research projects.

**Government Reports and Legal Documents:** The government releases information intended for its own use or for public use. These types of documents can be an excellent source of information. An example of a government report is the U.S. Census data. Most government reports and legal documents can now be accessed online. Acceptable for all research projects.

**Press Releases and Advertising:** Companies and special interest groups produce texts to help persuade readers to act in some way or inform the public about some new development. Generally acceptable for all research projects, if relevant.

**Flyers, Pamphlets, Leaflets:** While some flyers or pamphlets are created by reputable sources, because of the ease in which they are created, many less-than-reputable sources also produce these. They are useful for quick reference or very general information. Generally acceptable for all research projects, if relevant.

**Multimedia:** Printed material is certainly not the only option for finding research. Also consider media sources such as radio and television broadcasts, interactive talks, and public meetings. Generally acceptable for all research projects, if relevant.

**Internet-Only Sources**

**Websites:** Most of the information on the Internet is distributed via websites. Websites vary widely in quality of information and validity of sources. Acceptable depending on the reliability of the information presented and relevancy of information.

**Weblogs / Blogs:** A rather recent development in web technology, weblogs or blogs are a type of interactive journal where writers post and readers respond. They vary widely in quality of information and validity of sources. For example, many prestigious journalists and public figures may have blogs, which may be more credible of a blog than most. Acceptable depending on the reliability of the information presented and relevancy of information—personal blogs from random people are generally not acceptable, though blogs written by an author, for instance, could be.

**Message boards, discussion lists, and chat rooms:** Discussion lists, chat rooms, and message boards exist for all kinds of disciplines both in and outside of the university. However, plenty of boards exist that are rather unhelpful and poorly researched. Acceptable depending on the reliability of the information presented and relevancy of information—discussions from random people are generally not acceptable, though discussions in which the author, for instance, has participated in could be.

**Multimedia:** The Internet has a multitude of multimedia resources including online broadcasts and news, images, audio files, and interactive websites. Acceptable depending on the reliability of the information presented and relevancy of information.