Research Source Evaluation

This rubric is designed to help you determine whether a work is of high enough quality to be used as a source for your papers and projects here at the College of William and Mary. Using the guidelines below, you should be able to rule in or out any potential source, whether it is in written or electronic format. Complete the checklist and then subtract the number of "NO" checks from the number of "YES" checks. The highest a source can score is 17 and the higher the score, the better the source is likely to be. As a rule of thumb, you will want to use sources that score 13-17 points. And if you have more than 3 or 4 "DON'T KNOW" checks for a source, it probably isn't a good choice. If, after using this rubric, you still are not sure whether to use something as a source or not, consult your professor.

CREDIBILITY (Author is knowledgeable and truthful about the topic)

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1. Is the author's experience or education relevant to the topic?			
2. Does the author provide contact information?			
3. Is the author associated with a respected organization?			
4. Has the information been through the peer-review process?			
5. Is the source free of poor grammar or misspelled words?			

ACCURACY (Information is timely and factual)

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
6. For the topic, is the information up-to-date?			
7. Does the source include discussion of all relevant facts?			
8. Is the intended audience for the source clearly stated?			
9. Is the purpose of the source clearly stated?			

REASONABLENESS (Information is presented fairly, objectively, moderately, and consistently)

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
10. Does the source make arguments or claims based on facts, rather than emotional appeals?			
11. Does the potential source acknowledge alternative arguments or points of view?			
12. Is the information presented free of bias or conflict of interest?			
13. Is the information believable, given what you know about the world?			
14. Is the information free of contradictions?			

SUPPORT (Information is -- or can be -- corroborated)

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
15. Are the sources that the author used evident (in a bibliography or some other documentation)?			
16. Are statistics documented?			
17. Can you triangulate this source (find two other sources that agree with it)?			

CHECKS TOTAL

YES - NO =