Evaluating Sources Using RADAR

Each time you find a new information source, switch on your RADAR and ask yourself the following questions:

**Relevance:** HOW is the information that you have found relevant to your assignment?

**Authority:** WHO is the author? (this may be a person or an organization)

- What tells you that they are authoritative? What are their credentials?
  - Is the author well known and respected?
  - Does the author work for a reputable institution, e.g. a university, research center or organization (e.g. NASA)?
  - Does the author have good qualifications and experience?
  - What does the ‘About Us’ button tell you?
  - Is other information available about them (e.g. from Google?)
  - Does the URL of the site give you clues about authority?
    - Look for names of reputable organizations in the URL
    - Look at the endings of the web addresses:
      - .edu or.ac indicate universities (but be careful because these addresses may also be used by students: % or ~ before a name indicates that the author is a student)
      - .gov indicates official government sites
      - .org indicates a non-profit organization
  - Does knowing the authority of the site help you make a judgment about the ACCURACY of the information?
  - Even if you have doubts about the authority of the site, does it contain links to other authoritative or helpful sources?

**Date:** WHEN was the information published? Is the publication date important to you?

**Appearance:** WHAT CLUES can you get from the APPEARANCE of the source?

- Does the information look serious and professional? Does it have citations and references?
- Is it written in formal, academic language? Or does it look as if it was written by a non-professional?
- Does it look as if it was published for children? * Or to sell something?

**Reason:** WHY did the writer publish this?

- To produce a balanced, well-researched, professional piece of work to add to the body of knowledge?
- Was it written as part of an ongoing debate, to counter an opposing claim?
- Or is it for propaganda, and biased? Note: a biased or problematic site may still be useful to you; the key is to recognize its bias or limitations.
- Or was it written in order to sell something? * Or is it a spoof site, written for fun?

Note: RADAR is a palindrome, i.e. it reads the same whether you start reading at the beginning or the end. The RADAR approach is more than palindromic, as it allows you to begin your evaluation using any one of the 5 letters or criteria.