Tips for Choosing the Right Source

adapted from *Determine if You Have the Right Source for Your Assignment* by University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/rightsource.html

When choosing sources for your Expert Project, you are looking for sources that:

- Support your argument
- Provide background information on your topic
- Provide contrary views you can take issue with in your paper
- Have reliable statistical data, time lines, and other information

Don't worry if you don't initially find the sources or answers you expect to find--it takes time and patience. If you're getting frustrated or have any questions, don't hesitate to ask me for help.

When choosing sources, you won't have time to read it in its entirety before deciding if you can use it for your project. Here are some tips for determining if different books, articles and web pages will be beneficial to you:

Books

- Use the table of contents and look for keywords in chapter titles and headings. Does this look like a work that engages with your research questions?
- Check the index for important terms and names
- Browse the bibliography or list of works cited (usually before the index at the end of the text, or at the end of chapters in an edited collection). Does this work seem to cite sources that are also relevant? If so, track them down--even books that aren't perfect for your topic (too general, for instance) may lead you to better sources.

Articles

- Read the introduction and get an idea of the direction the author is taking. Will this help you answer your research question?
- If you're working with an online article, use your computer's FIND function to locate key words or phrases in the article. Read around the important phrases for context. Is this author taking the issue in a direction that connects with your own ideas and questions?
- Articles for adults often have an abstract, or a brief description of the information contained in the article. Read it to decide if the article matches what you are looking for.

Web pages

- Who is publishing or sponsoring the page?
- Use the URL to help you discover the source and/or sponsor of the page.
- Is contact information for the author/publisher provided?
- How recently was the page updated?
- Be particularly wary of bias when viewing web pages. Anyone can create a web page about any topic. YOU must verify the validity of the information.