Evaluating Search Results

Evaluating Search Results as a Whole
Long search results lists can be overwhelming. Before sifting through each record, use these quick ways of evaluating the results as a whole. (See the next page for tips on evaluating individual records.)

Study the information provided about the entire list of results.
Most databases give helpful information about your search results. After entering a search, look on the results page for options to limit the search.

Pay particular attention to information provided in menu bars (usually located in a left-hand side bar).

Ask yourself:
• What does the information about your results tell you?
• Do these look like the kinds of records you need?
• Does the summary of your results offer any clues for how to refine your search?

A keyword search for chocolate health:
(in OneSearch@IU)

The left-hand menu on the OneSearch@IU offers many ways to understand and refine your results. Additional options are at the top of the page and on the right-hand side.

Click headings to expand

Number of Articles in this category
**Evaluate an Information Record**

After reviewing information about your overall search results (described above), you may want to refine your search strategy to get more relevant records. Once you're happy with the overall results, have a closer look at several individual records to determine their relevance. (You may decide then to gather highly relevant sources, or if needed to revise your search strategy.)

Most databases provide a brief record and a detailed record of each source. Both can help you quickly evaluate the item.

**Brief record**  
*(in the database OneSearch@IU)*

- **Title**

**Detailed record**  
*(in OneSearch@IU)*: Clicking on the document title usually gives you to the full record. (The areas highlighted here help to identify what the document is about.)

**Next Steps:**

These first steps of evaluation will help you identify potentially useful sources. Once looking more carefully at an individual source, consider the questions on the handout “Evaluating Sources Rhetorically.”