



Lifting the Cloud

micro-sessions on grey literature



Part I

- 1. DEFINE**
- 2. SOURCES**
- 3. SEARCH BASICS**



DEFINE

Grey Literature Defined

“Grey literature stands for manifold document types produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats that are protected by intellectual property rights, of sufficient quality to be collected and preserved by library holdings or institutional repositories, but not controlled by commercial publishers i.e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body.”

Schnopfel J. Towards a Prague definition of grey literature. Presented at: Twelfth International Conference on Grey Literature: Transparency in Grey Literature. Grey Tech Approaches to High Tech Issues. Prague, 6-7 Dec 2010, Czech Republic. pp.11-26. Available from: http://archivesic.ccsd.cnrs.fr/sic_00581570/document



.... In Plain Language

Anything that's not a book or journal article is most likely grey literature

Grey Literature can be...

- ✓ Websites
- ✓ Dissertations / Theses
- ✓ Statistical Reports
- ✓ Conference Proceedings
- ✓ Technical Reports
- ✓ Government Publications
- ✓ Green / White Papers

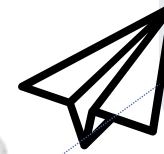
- ✓ Institutional Reports
- ✓ Streamed Video
- ✓ Blog Posts
- ✓ Podcasts
- ✓ Tweets
- ✓ Wikis
- ✓ Newsletters

Characteristics of Grey Literature

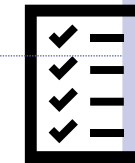
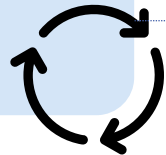
Hard to find
(not indexed in databases)



Limited quantities, may disappear

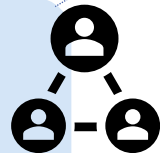


Difficult to know when to
stop searching



Outside publishing channels

Usually not peer reviewed



Supplement peer-reviewed
literature & balance publication
bias





Why is Grey Literature Important in Public Health?

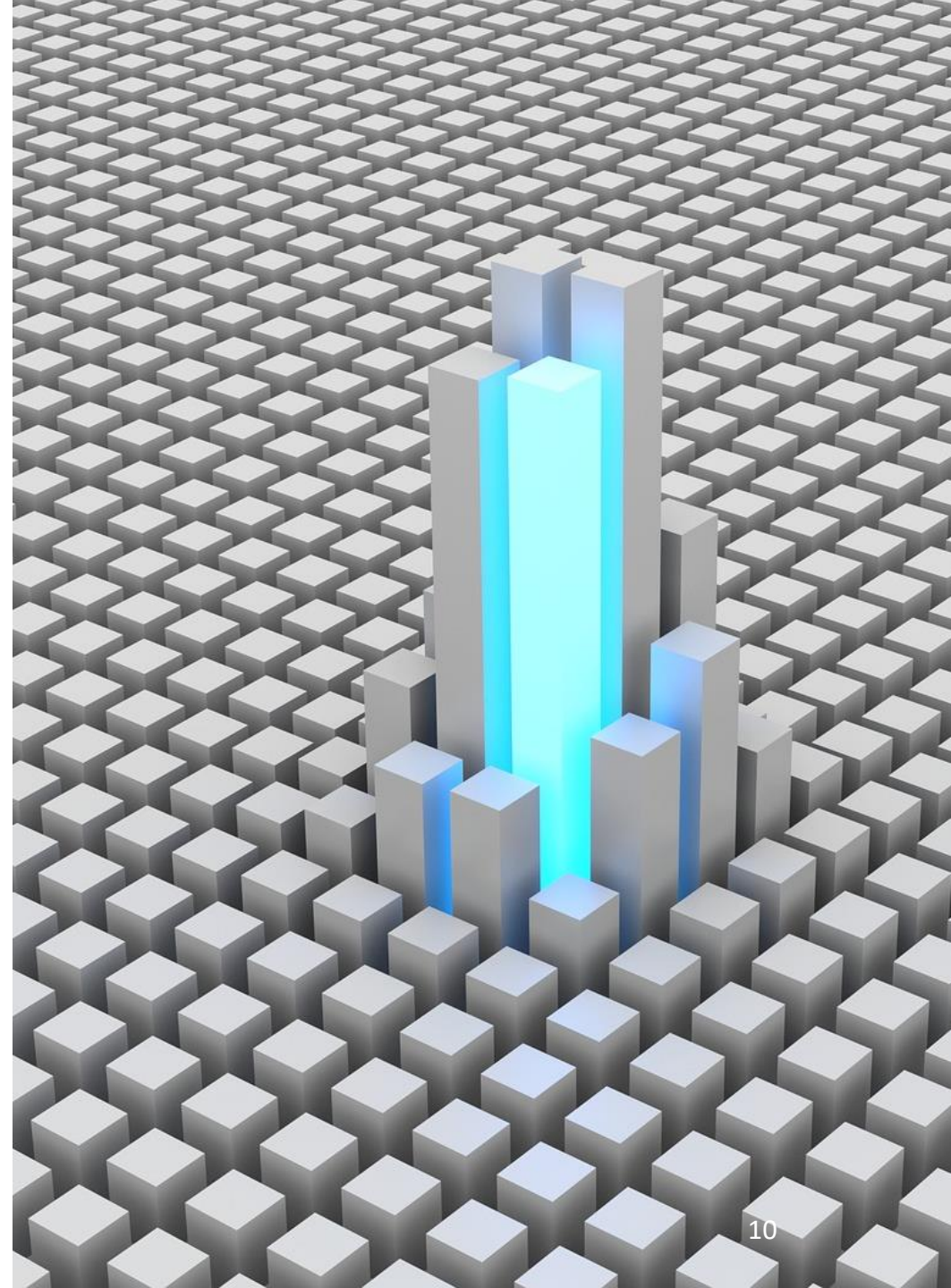
- Numerous, diverse partners & stakeholders outside academia
- Journal article conventions may not a good fit for in-depth reports
- Importance of best practices & public health guidelines
- Fewer researchers in academia specialize in public health
- Reliance on non-health data sources
- Leadership role of agencies, government: open publishing
- Front-line practitioners tend to publish via grey literature



IDENTIFY & SEARCH

Example Sources

- 1. Experts in the Field**
- 2. Websites & Repositories**
 - Core Knowledge Producing Organizations
 - Mental Health & Substance Use Health
- 3. Search Engines**
 - Custom
 - General





Experts in the Field

- Have in-depth knowledge of subject matter
- May be aware of internal resources or in-progress research by colleagues
- Are up-to-date on new research that is being conducted in their field
- May create opportunities to collaborate & share work to maximize efficiency



Experts in the Field

- Public Health Colleagues
 - SLSP listserv
 - OPHEN
 - APHEO
 - Mental Health & Substance Use Health listservs
 - Other listservs you may have access to

Knowledge Producing Organizations

- organizations who produce research; can be primary research or synthesized findings from pre-existing research
- often archive and preserve intellectual output from their institution



- CAN
 - [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#)
 - [Institut national de santé publique du Québec \(INSPQ\)](#)
 - [National Collaborating Centres for Public Health](#)
 - [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
 - [Public Health Ontario](#)
- USA
 - [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- INTL
 - [NICE Public Health Guidance](#)
 - [Euro. Center for Disease Prevention and Control](#)
 - [Public Health England](#)
 - [World Health Organization](#)

Repositories

- repositories are collections of resources often produced by various organizations
- content is selected by website administrators and therefore may be limited



CAN

- [Health Evidence](#)
- [Public Health +](#)

USA

- [The Community Guide](#)
- [NACCHO Model Practice Database](#)
- [DISASTERlit](#)

INTL

- [Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [TRIP Database](#)

Sample Mental Health & Substance Use Health Websites

Canadian Sample:

[York region COVID-19 guidance: mental health resources](#)

[National collaborating centre for healthy public policy](#)

[Mental health commission of Canada](#)

[Canadian centre on substance use and addiction: mental health publications](#)

[Public health Ontario: mental health](#)

[Canadian mental health association](#)

[Statistics Canada: mental health and well-being](#)

[Public health agency of Canada and Health Canada mental health and wellness](#)

[Children's mental health Ontario](#)

[Knowledge institute on child and youth mental health and addictions](#)

[NCCPH: population mental health](#)

[Mental health promotion in public health community of practice](#)

International Sample:

[Mental Health Europe](#)

[European Public Health Alliance: Mental Health](#)

[OECD Mental Health](#)

[National Institute for Health and Care Excellence: Mental Health and Well Being](#)

[CDC: Mental Health](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

[World Health Organization: Mental Health and Substance Use](#)

General Tips: How to Search a Website

1. Don't Start with the Search Bar

- Does the website have: a Publication Listing? Topic Drop Down Menu?
- How has the organization already organized their content for you?

2. Is there an Advanced Search option or Search Tips?

- Can you search with an Exact Phrase *"built environment"*?
- Use Truncation (e.g., *build* = builds, building, builders, etc.*)?
- Is Boolean automatic? (*AND / OR*)

3. When using the search bar, try ONE concept at a time

- Add more concepts as needed
- No search tips? Try variations of a word and see if you bring back more, less, or the same number of results in the search bar

Live Search Example

TEST 1: Search Bar vs. Topic List

Knowledge Producing Organization: [NICE Public Health Guidance](#)

TEST 2: Single Concept vs. Multiple

Repository: [The Community Guide](#)

TEST 3: Advanced Search Options & Filters

Database: [TRIPP](#)





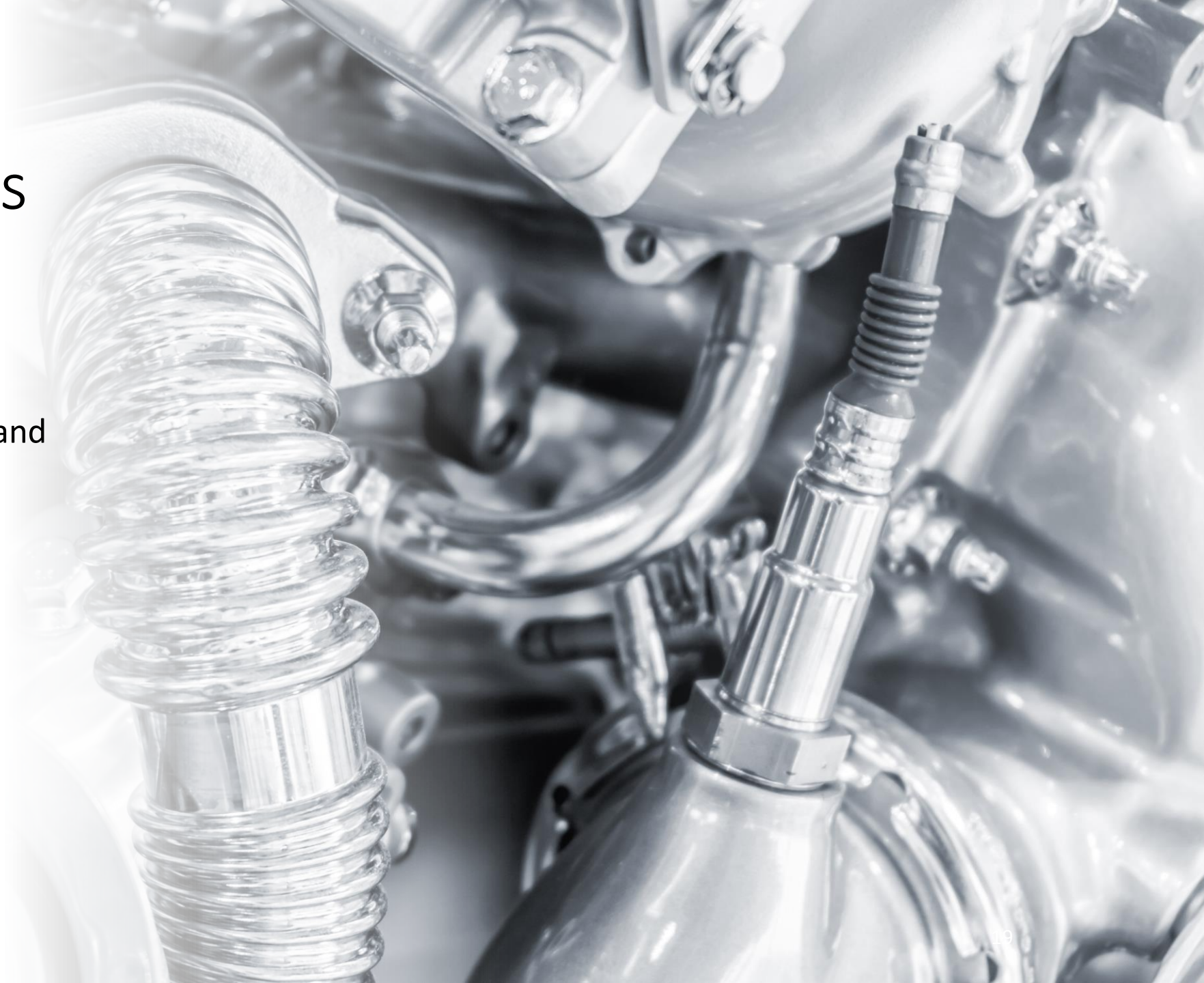
Part II

- 1. SEARCH ENGINES**
- 2. KEEPING TRACK**
- 3. CRITICAL APPRAISAL**
- 4. COPYRIGHT**

Search Engines

Capture the visible web

Search many organizations and
webpages at once





Search Engines



Search Engines: Advantages

Ideal for quick searches

Ideal for scoping questions

Diverse

Mega hits

Easy access to non-text sources
(i.e., videos, diagrams, etc.)

Ability to search within personal
accounts (Gmail, Calendar, Drive)



Search Engines: Drawbacks

- Personalized searching
- Echo Chamber Effect
- Proprietary ranking algorithm
- Searches for unknown synonyms and related terms
- Limits the number of search terms you can use
- Impossible to remove duplicate results
- Often cannot search within online databases (“invisible web”) or deep web
- Searches lack standardization and reproducibility



Overcoming Limitations

- If overwhelmed by search results, review only first 100 (*relevancy drops dramatically after this point*)
- Test synonyms by searching a single word and looking at bolded words in the results list
- Change your search settings (*search customization, personal ad settings*)
- Use [Advanced Search](#) options to increase number of terms and control over search



Overcoming Limitations

- Use Advanced Search to:
 - Search for exact phrases using quotation marks
 - Limit by region or file type
 - Restrict by date range
 - Choose where keywords appear on the webpage
- Ensure your Boolean terms are capitalized
- Clear your search history; delete cookies
- Try additional search engines and compare results



Beyond Google, Bing, & Yahoo...



- META-SEARCHES: [Dogpile](#)
- PRIVACY: [Qwant](#), [StartPage](#), [Duck Duck Go](#)
- DEEP WEB: [MedNar](#)
- CONSCIOUS: [Ecosia](#), [GiveWater](#)
- FILTER: [Million Short](#)

Programmable Search Engines

- Retrieve results from specified websites
- Good for targeted searches – promotes efficiency
- Created by OPHLA for Client Health Units:

[Search Ontario Public Health Unit Websites](#)

[Search Canadian Health Agency Websites](#)

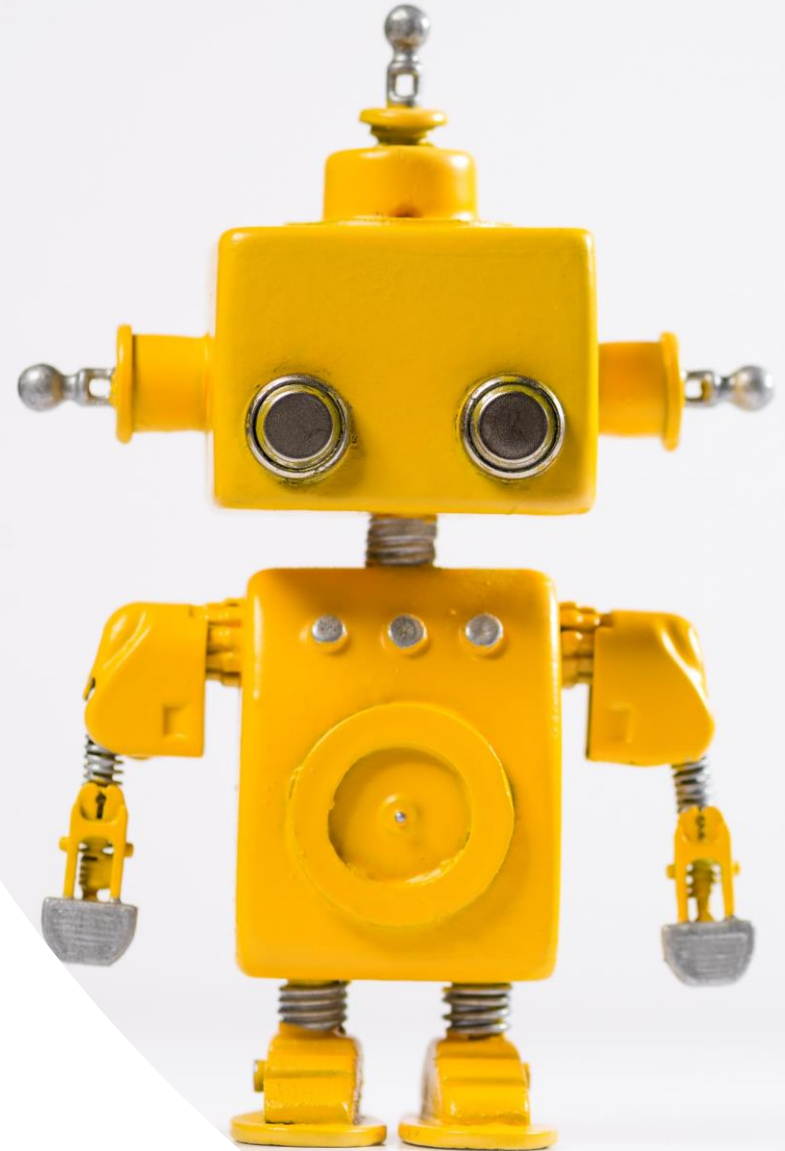
[Search US State Government Websites](#)

[Search Select International Public Health](#)

[Websites](#)

AI Chatbots & Search Engines

- Microsoft The new Bing
- Google Bard
- Open AI Chat GPT





KEEPING TRACK

Keeping Track

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Source Type	Name	URL	Search Query	Date Searched	# of Results Retrieved	# of Results Scanned	# of Results Selected	Notes
2	Website	Cancer Guidelines Dat	https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/tools/cancer-guideline	brain	08-Nov-19	70	70	3	
3	Search Engine	Google	https://www.google.ca/	brain AND cancer	08-Nov-19	317,000,000	100	8	
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Principles of Searching Grey Literature

- Step 1** → **Identify your sources in advance**
Make a list of key knowledge-producing organizations (core and topical), grey literature repositories, conferences, etc. you are going to search
- Step 2** → **Consult colleagues, experts to prioritize sources**
Social media can be a good source for this type of expertise
- Step 3** → **Set clear parameters to avoid information overload**
Specify the # of pages of web search results you will review; Set limits: date, jurisdiction, language, etc.
- Step 4** → **Do a targeted search of websites (key organizations, conferences, repositories, etc.)**
Track your search and results
- Step 5** → **Do a general web search to capture other sources**
Use search engines to explore additional relevant resources
- Step 6** → **Scan references lists of all relevant items you find**

Staying Up-To-Date

- Social Media Channels
- Sign up for new Newsletter, Blog & Podcast alerts
- Create a programmable search engine
- Ask your librarian





APPRAISE



Critical Appraisal

- Evaluating website content
 - Date of publication?
(currency is important)
 - URL
 - Web Design
 - Contact Information
 - Authorship



Critical Appraisal

The background image shows a close-up of a person's hand holding a blue pen over an open book. In the background, another person's hand is pointing at a document on a table. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a study or classroom environment.

- Is the agency well-known?
- What are the biases?
- Consult colleagues or experts if possible

Key Questions:

1. Who is the author, are they who they claim to be? (legitimacy)
2. How current is the information?
3. Is the information based on research/data/analysis or is it opinion piece?
4. Does the author/host have an agenda? (bias)
5. Is the information shared for commercial purposes?
6. Can you verify some cited sources, facts? (methodological quality)
7. Does the hosting site have a sponsor?
8. Does this information add anything new?
9. Is the evidence clear and relevant?
10. Tools: [AACODS](#) | [Public Health Ontario Guide to Critically Appraising Literature](#)

Additional Tools

1. [Evaluating Information Sources](#) (McMaster University Library)
2. [Evaluating Primary Source Web Sites](#) (RUSA History Section, American Library Association)
3. [Evaluating Resource Quality - Web Resources](#) (Christopher Center Library, Valparaiso University)
4. [Evaluating Resources](#) (Berkeley Library, University of California)
5. [Evaluating Sources](#) (Duke University Libraries)
6. [Evaluating Web Pages](#) (Wolfgram Memorial Library, Widener University)
7. [How to Evaluate a Web Page](#) (Colorado State University Libraries)



COPYRIGHT



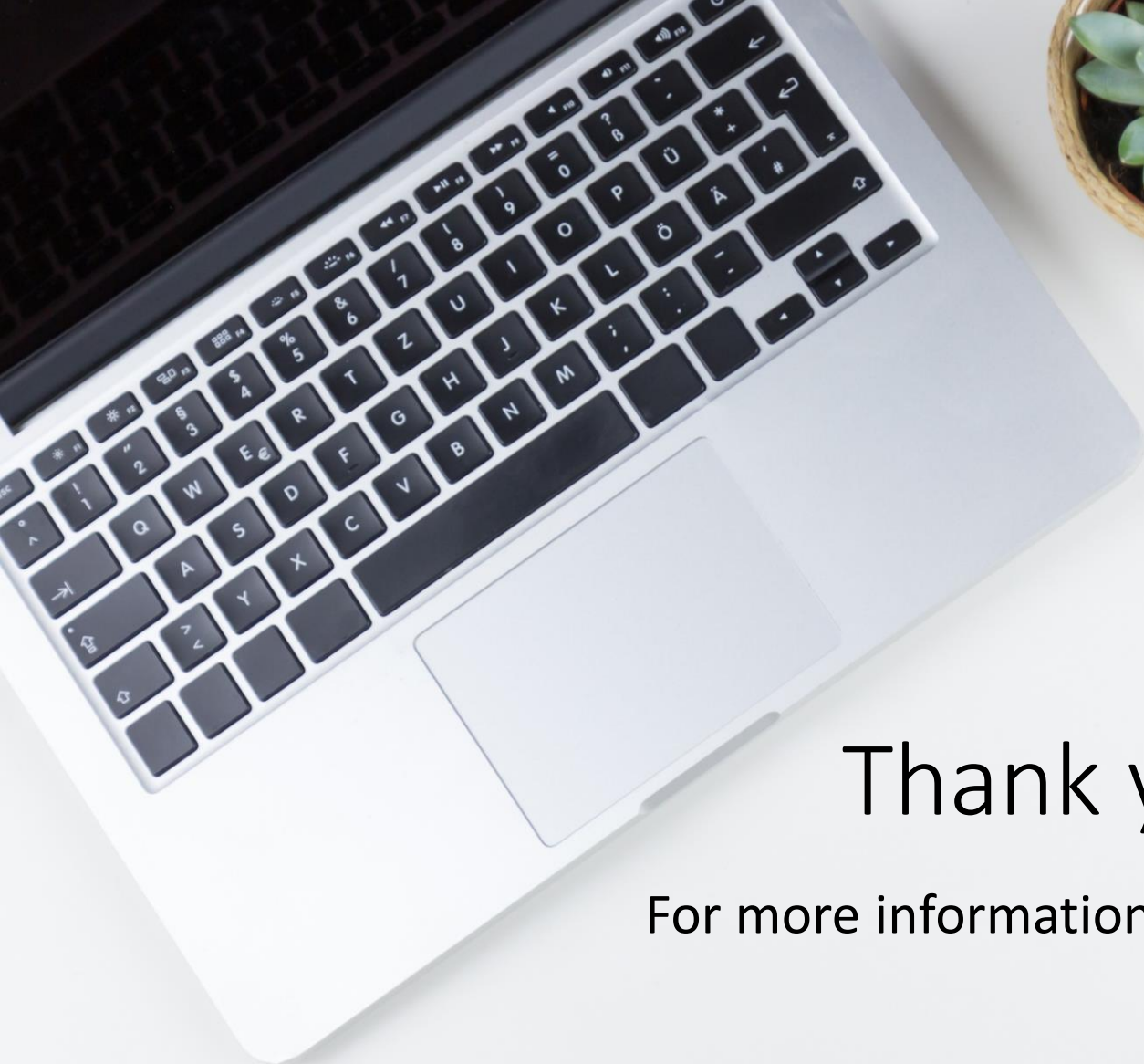
Copyright & Grey Lit

- All internet content (even free content) is copyrighted
 - Infringement of copyright poses legal risks even when using grey literature sources
- Copyright applies regardless of the use of the © symbol
- Avoid copyright infringement by:
 - Attributing your sources
 - Checking for a copyright or permissions statement
 - Determining if your proposed use infringes copyright
 - Obtain permission from the rightsholder if necessary
- Get **written** permission for these uses and attribute the work as per the rights holder's wishes



Additional Resources

1. [SLSP Find Grey Literature](#)
2. [Grey matters: a practical tool for searching health-related grey literature](#) / CADTH
3. Book: [Searching the grey literature](#) / Sarah Bonato
4. McArthur A. [How to find and use grey literature for scoping reviews](#) / Public Health Ontario 2016



Thank you!

For more information, please [Contact Us](#)