Math 311w Library Assignment

http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/researchguides/physcimath/math.html

How can you trust information you find on the Internet? Where can you find an answer that is detailed enough to be useful, but not too complex for you to understand? Since anyone can publish information instantly on the World Wide Web distinguishing quality information can be very difficult. Before the coming of the information age, there were only a few options for research – books, magazines, and scholarly journals.

Scholarly journals (also called academic, peer-reviewed, or refereed journals) are the traditional method of communicating new scientific discoveries. Authors generally submit their articles to several other scientists for review and comment, and these reviewers must approve the article before it is published. Since the audience is other scientists, the language used is highly technical and specific to the field. Scholarly journals are one type of primary source for research.

Primary sources are newly created or recorded knowledge by a scientist or researcher. These can be scholarly journal articles, scientific reports or even an in-person presentation. Secondary sources review, discuss, or analyze primary sources and are written later. Some examples of secondary sources are encyclopedia articles, science news reports, and most books.

Both types of information sources may have citations, references to earlier research. Citations in a primary source are an acknowledgement of previous research and give a link between earlier knowledge and the current study. Citations in a secondary source indicate where the author got the information they used to write their review of the topic.

For this lab, work in groups of two at each computer. Take notes on what you find on the back.

1. Visit the Wikipedia article for RSA Cryptography http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSA_(algorithm) and go to the Notes near the bottom of the page. Since this article is a secondary source, these are the many information sources used to create it. Identify the type of information source (scholarly journal article, news report, book, etc) for each of the three references on the back of this worksheet.

2. For each of the three, evaluate it on the following criteria:
   a. Authority – who is the author and what is their level of expertise
   b. Audience – who is the article written for and at what level is the article written
   c. Currency – how recent is the article and does that matter
   d. Content – could you understand and use the article for a paper in this class

3. Now go to Lionsearch (http://psu.summon.serialssolutions.com) and find a scholarly article on RSA Cryptography and cite it below.
1. I used library resources to research some of my assignments in this class. (YES / NO)

2. If you answered YES to #1, list the library resources that you used. (e.g. books in the catalog, magazines, newspapers, articles from Lionsearch, articles from MathSciNet)

3. The library instruction that I received this semester caused me to be more critical of web sites & other information sources that I use for assignments. (YES / NO)

4. The Library Instruction I received this semester helped me better understand how to find and use library resources. (YES / NO)

5. It was easy for me to find the library resources that I needed for my assignments in this class. (YES / NO)

6. If you used library resources, do you feel that they helped you to achieve a higher grade on your assignments? (YES / NO) If not sure, please explain.

7. Do you have any additional comments?