

How did the early church leaders determine which books would be considered for the Bible and which ones would be discarded?

or

What criteria did they use to determine which documents would be included in the New Testament?

1. The books must have apostolic authority - They must have been written by apostles themselves, who were eyewitnesses to what they wrote about or followers of the apostles. So in the case of Mark or Luke, while they weren't among the twelve disciples early tradition has it that Mark was a helper of Peter, and Luke was an associate of Paul.
2. Criteria of conformity to what was called the rule of faith. That is, was the document congruent with the basic Christian tradition that the church recognized as normative?
3. Criteria of whether a document had had continuous acceptance and usage by the church at large.