COMBATING "FAKE NEWS" AND MISINFORMATION WITH INFORMATION LITERACY

By: Lindsay Horbatuck and Laurie Sears
"Never have we had so much information at our fingertips. Whether this bounty will make us smarter and better informed or more ignorant and narrow-minded will depend on our awareness of this problem and our educational response to it."

(Stanford History Education Group, 2016, pg. 5)
What is "Fake News"?

- Fake news is reporting that is created with the intent to deceive, divert attention, and/or confuse the reader. It can be silly, or it can be serious.

- One problem with the confusion surrounding fake news is that there is real fake news and that is perplexing and even dangerous for us all.

- For those of us concerned about information and media literacy fake news is a divisive distraction to the real and difficult task of learning how to locate accurate and reliable information on a given topic and understanding the importance of such information.
What issues do students encounter in finding good information for a given purpose?
Problems with elementary grades

- Students need to critically read the information they come across on websites but elementary students are emergent readers and are just starting to learn how to read critically.

- If students don't have the strategies in print text they will have trouble carrying it to online documents.

- Learning to read vs. Reading to learn

(Corio, 2003)
Student Research Study

- If you go on the internet, what search engine do you use most often?
- Do you think all of the information on the internet is true?
- When you want to know the answer to a question, where do you go?
- How do you decide which website has the correct or right information?
- How do you choose if information on the web is accurate?
When you want to know the answer to a question, where do you go?

Ask someone: 31 - 60%
Students’ answers to the question, “How do you decide which website has the correct or right information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at the URL</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for approved websites</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare the website to other sites</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problems for Middle/Upper Schoolers

- Misconception on the part of teachers, administrators, and parents that students pick up the ability to find good information easily.
- So much information....
- Knowing what information they are looking for
- Limited online searching skills + overconfidence in skills and habits
- Considering sources, search strategy, key terms
- Want answers to questions directly. Don’t want to/know how to work for it.
- Accustomed to being spoon fed (i.e., given the information or the sources rather than having to find it themselves)
Problems for Middle/Upper Schoolers

- Insufficient information or background to gauge accuracy.
- Variation among formerly “trusted” URLs .edu .gov
- Short attention spans
- Inability or aversion to skimming and/or close reading
- Lack of understanding of the sources (what kind of information is in what kind of sources, which are bona fide).
- Lack of patience.
- Teachers who don’t know (or don’t care) about the quality of sources or the importance of teaching searching and evaluation skills to students
- Lack of understanding/appreciation for difference between scholarly
What methods can we use to help students be thoughtful consumers and producers of information?
Elementary Grades

- Make the evaluation criteria relevant to the students
- Have them apply it to something that they are working on
- Teach and practice basic library, technology, and research skills
- Build a strong reading foundation
  - Basic idea of truth versus reality through stories
What is the most important thing to look at when evaluating a website?
Website Evaluation

- Relevance
- Author
- Currency
- Domain Name
Middle & Upper Grades

- Reviewing the basics of website evaluation and digging into the various considerations on a developmentally appropriate level. \(^1, 2, 3\)

- When is timeliness relevant/not?

- Point of view v. bias – when to use information

- What can you tell from the URL and what you can’t

Adapted “Searching the World Wide Web”, by Sam Miller, 1998
- Provide opportunities for students to locate information for a variety of purposes, through daily activity and well-designed projects.

- Infusing consistent messaging and practice of information literacy skills and habits throughout the curriculum and within daily activities (not just library/media classes).

- **Being clear about why some sources are fine for quick reference but not scholarly research**

**Characteristics of Yellow Journalism**

- Frank Luther Mott defines yellow journalism in terms of five characteristics:
  - Scare headlines in huge print, often of minor news
  - Lavish use of pictures, or imaginary drawings
  - Use of faked interviews, misleading headlines, pseudoscience, and a parade of false information from people holding themselves out to be experts, but are not.
  - Emphasis on full-color Sunday supplements, usually with comic strips
  - Dramatic sympathy with the "underdog" against the system.
How can we communicate the issues facing students to teachers so that every teacher will feel responsible and capable of integrating searching and evaluation skills in their classes?
All grade levels

- Administrative buy in and support.
- Orientation time
- Classroom push-in/assistance
- Sharing of lessons and curriculum across grade levels
- Sharing of scholarly articles pertaining to this topic
- Regular time during faculty meeting
- Share time during school meetings (w/faculty and students)
- Communicate with parents
What specific lessons, strategies, tools, and assessments can we put in place to encourage students to think more logically about search skills and more critically about information they find for their academic needs and consume in their everyday lives?
Think-Pair-Share

Fukushima Nuclear Flowers
by pleasegoogleShakerAamerpleasegoogleDavidK...

Jul 22 2015
Elementary Grades

- **Examples**
  - Show students examples and have them evaluate

- **Passion Project**
  - Walking through the steps of website evaluation
Middle and Upper Grades

- Allowing students an opportunity to think and talk about what makes information valuable and useful for a given purpose.

- Giving the students ownership of creating a resource list using - finding good sources to share with the class. ([Google custom search](https://www.google.com/custom)).

- Make “not falling for fake” a fun habit. (Get them to bring in samples of bad information – and provide rewards – make a game of it.)
• Understanding why and how to evaluate the quality of sources
• Research mindset/Search Strategies – Key term, limiters/advance search functions, knowledge of sources
• Google Scholar, Databases
• Read critically, Teach students to make a habit of intelligently questioning what they read and watch.


Annotated list of useful articles


Brown, Damon. “How to Choose Your News.” YouTube, TEDEducation, 5 June 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-Y-z6HmRgl&t=86s. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017. This is a useful video, appropriate for grades 4 and up (perhaps younger) explaining the background of how we get our news and steps we can take in order to be responsible about the news we take in and pass on.


Loton, Giliad. “Fake News Is Not the Only Problem – Data & Society: Points.” Points, Data & Society: Points, 22 Nov. 2016, points.datasociety.net/fake-news-is-not-the-only-problem-f00ec8dcbf. Accessed 18 Apr. 2017. This article focuses on the concern that our obsession with fake news is causing us to overlook other equally concerning ways in which people are manipulated in other ways.
Useful articles (cont.)

“Media Literacy Resources.” NewseumED, Newseum, 1 Mar. 2018, newseumed.org/stack/media-literacy-resources/. The Newseum has amazing new literacy resources for teachers and students.


“Welcome to the Digital Resource Center.” Digital Resource Center :Center for News Literacy, Stony Brook Center for News Literacy, drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017. This site is an excellent resource for teaching news literacy. “News Literacy is a newly emerging academic discipline designed to teach students how to take skillful possession of their power as citizens by becoming perceptive news consumers. At a time when the digital revolution is spawning an unprecedented daily flood of information and disinformation, the course seeks to help students recognize the differences between fact and rumor.”

Contact Us:

Lindsay Horbatuck
Lindsay_horbatuck@landon.net

Laurie Sears
Laurie_Sears@landon.net
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