

HS Intro to Public Services

Overall Lesson: **The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Public Services sector**

Sub lesson for Monday, April 6: Identifying good sources of information

Learning Target:

Students will understand how to identify sources that provide factual, objective information versus unsupported or misleading information

Bell Ringer

- Do a quick Google search about COVID-19.
- Find **two** articles talking about the virus itself (*how it's transmitted from person-to-person, why it's different/difficult to fight, efforts to find a vaccine, etc. - not news reports about the updated number infected, etc.*)
- After reading the articles, **write two sentences about each** describing why you think the articles are/are not good sources on the topic

Key Terms to Know

(definitions from dictionary.com)

- **Fact:** a thing that is known or proved to be true.
- **Opinion:** a view or judgment formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.
- **Misinformation:** false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive. (*note: not all misinformation is intended to deceive*)
- **Disinformation:** false information which is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media. (*note: the intent to mislead is the whole point of disinformation*)
- **Credible:** able to be believed; convincing.

Conducting Research

Start with 3 basic questions:

1. What kind of information am I looking for?
 - Facts? Opinions? News reports? Research studies? Analyses? Personal reflections? History?
2. Where would be a likely place to look? (*Most useful sources?*)
 - Libraries? The Internet? Academic periodicals? Newspapers? Government records?
3. How much information do I need?
 - How many sources of information are you looking for or do you need? Do you need to view both sides of the issue?

Finding Credible Sources

Think about the following questions:

- How often do you get information from the Internet?
- How much of it do you believe?
- How reliable do you think Internet information is?
- How does it compare to information from books?

Finding Credible Sources

- Information is everywhere, but not all of it is valid, useful, or accurate
- That's where evaluating the sources of information comes in
- Every day you sift through information and make decisions about what you consume, and you want to make responsible choices that you won't regret

Finding Credible Sources

- Become a detective when researching:
 - Decide where to look
 - What clues to search for
 - What to accept
- You may find too much information or too little
 - Don't be tempted to accept whatever you find
 - Learning how to evaluate information effectively is a skill you need both for this course and for your life.

Evaluating Sources

- Questions to ask:
 - How credible is the author?
 - If the document is anonymous, what do you know about the organization/website behind it?
 - How timely is the source? (*Posted 1 week ago or 20 years out of date?*)
 - Some information becomes dated when new research is available
 - Other older sources can be quite solid 50 or 100 years later
 - Can you find some of the same information elsewhere? Do other sources have similar info?
 - Do some cross-checking

Evaluating Sources

- Check for a list of references or other citations
 - Verifies accuracy & could lead you to related material and additional good sources
- Try to determine if the content of the source is facts, opinions, or propaganda
 - If you think the source is offering facts, are the sources for those facts clearly indicated?

Evaluating Internet Sources

- Things to remember about Internet sources:
 - Anyone with a computer and access to the Internet can publish a web site
 - *Most don't have editors, fact-checkers, or other types of reviewers.*
 - Authors and affiliations are difficult to determine.
 - *Some sites may have author and sponsorship listed, but many do not.*
 - *If there is an author, his/her qualifications might be hard to find.*

Evaluating Internet Sources

- Additional things to remember about Internet sources:
 - Sources the author used may not be clearly indicated.
 - Websites that appear factual may actually be persuasive and/or deceptive.
 - Dates of publication and timeliness of information are questionable.
 - *Dates listed on websites could be the date posted, date updated, or a date may not be listed at all.*
 - *Makes it difficult to know how new the information is*

Evaluating Search Results

- Remember, when you search:
 - Different search engines might return different results in a different order
 - Wikipedia is not a reliable source
 - Can include results from paying advertisers
 - Some results won't be helpful
 - *Wrong topic, not enough information, incorrect or outdated information, shallow or untrustworthy source, wrong tone for your project, etc.*

Evaluating Search Results

- Remember, when you search:
 - Domain name extensions aren't a great way to tell whether a source is credible
 - Anyone can register .com, .net, .org or most other domain names
 - .edu and .gov can only be used by educational institutions and governmental institutions
 - *Still not necessarily reliable (Students and faculty can both have personal Web sites with .edu domain name extension)*

(Sources: Purdue Online Writing Lab
& Annenberg Classroom)

Evaluating Search Results

- Rank the following URLs in order of authority/credibility:
 - <http://random.blogspot.com>
 - <http://www.random.gov>
 - <http://www.columbia.edu/~jrandom>
 - <http://www.random.com>

Evaluating Search Results - ANSWERS

- Rank the following URLs in order of authority/credibility:
 - 1) <http://www.random.gov>
 - 2) <http://www.columbia.edu/~jrandom>
 - 3) <http://www.random.com>
 - 4) <http://random.blogspot.com>

Practice

- Look back at the two articles you found at the beginning of this lesson, *re-evaluate them*, then *re-write your two sentences* based on the following questions:
 - Does the domain name add credibility, take away credibility or not really change your view of the article's credibility?
 - Does it have an author?
 - Is the company or organization behind the article clearly indicated?
 - How timely is the article?
 - Is the content factual?
 - Are sources or references clearly indicated either in the article or at the end of it?

Additional Practice and Resources

- How to evaluation information - a checklist:
<https://virtualchase.justia.com/how-evaluate-information-checklist/>
- Importance of being able to identify real versus fake news/information:
<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/11/23/503129818/study-finds-students-have-dismaying-inability-to-tell-fake-news-from-real>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/20/nyregion/fake-news-brooklyn-middle-school.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&smvar=wkndbau&r=1>
- Game! Identifying fake news: <http://factitious.augamestudio.com/#/>
- Game! How fake news is created and spreads:
<https://www.getbadnews.com/#next>