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Part of the Information Literacy Commons

Instruction @ the URI Libraries

Critical Thinking Needed for All Information, Not Just Fake News

Concern about fake news and alternative facts goes much deeper than any reflection on the current political situation in our country.

Being vigilant while we read, watch, and listen to information sources of any kind is valuable. All information is biased; it's *understanding the bias* that is essential. As instructors, we need to consistently provide opportunities for students to learn and practice using information in various ways so that they have multiple opportunities to get the message to *evaluate, evaluate, evaluate*!

Providing information evaluation opportunities helps students to become great learners and knowledgeable citizens, ready to explain and defend sources they choose for school work, and beyond this, to use information in meaningful and critical ways in their personal and career lives.

As an example, Vanessa Ortero's [2016 chart illustrating general political leanings of news sources](#), while interesting, overly simplifies bias in several ways. Consider that an article or op-ed piece published by the "liberal" *New York Times* may itself be somewhere to the left or right of the *Times'* recognized standing as liberal.

Even our often used [CRAAP Test](#) is not enough of a filter to unmask biased information. Similarly, while many library article databases purport to tell searchers which resources are scholarly, they mostly identify the entire journal as such, and do not discriminate between individual articles and letters to the editor.

Best Practices

- Include repeated opportunities for sharing various types of information from your discipline, pointing out differences in perspectives, impact of format on perception, and where sources sit on the continuum of consensus in the field.
- Regularly bring news from the field into class, offering your own and others' views on current topics.

Behind the Chart
Vanessa Ortero shared a lengthy post on her methods and rationale for the design of her infographic at http://www.allgeneralizationsarefalse.com/?p=65

For help developing library research assignments or to schedule a hands-on research session for your class, please contact Mary MacDonald, Head of Instruction, at marymac@uri.edu.

Additional Tips

In response to the "fake news" frenzy, the URI University Libraries provides a useful Library Guide, [News Literacy & Alternative Facts: How to Be a Responsible Information Consumer](#).

Getting Live Research Assistance, and Our New Live Chat App

You may have noticed the boxes on the Libraries' web pages and in databases that connect you to a live person for answers. This assistance is provided by librarians here at URI and specially trained students in the Library and Information Studies program to help you and your students at crucial points in the research process.

This service has grown from when it started in 2005 as an instant messaging service provided for those with AOL accounts. Now, any user of the Libraries' site or LibGuides can get custom assistance from those who know the many databases and research resources the University Libraries have to offer.

In addition, we act as guides on the side for researchers, helping them develop the skills to perform research and evaluate information on their own, rather than dispensing lists of articles. This helps students develop crucial information literacy skills so that they can select the best information for their needs instead of relying on what "just comes up."

If you have questions about our live research help services, please email the administrator, Amanda Izenstark at amanda@uri.edu.

By the Numbers
In Spring 2017...

1,801 Total students attended information literacy instruction sessions at the main library in Kingston. This includes:

946 WRT 104/106 students, who came to the Library for an introduction to finding articles.

855 students in 37 additional classes from a variety of departments attended sessions targeted to the information research needs of their classes.

Related Updates

Search Savvy Seminars for 2017-2018 - Please Provide Your Input!
We want to hear from you regarding what topics we should include in upcoming Search Savvy Seminars. Please share your ideas in our short annual survey at https://goo.gl/forms/Qmbdv3cmtWx0e5dp1

New Catalog Interface and New Interlibrary Loan Process
We're updating our catalog interface and interlibrary loan process to make things easier for you and your students. Head to the Libraries' website for news and updates as they happen. We also want to hear from you - if you have feedback about either change, please email urilibrarian@gmail.com.