

Information Literacy Skills for Social Media

Information literacy entails the ability to evaluate the credibility of an information source and the quality of the evidence presented. Traditionally, these decisions have been directed at print media. We want students to differentiate between scholarly, peer-reviewed sources, and other types of print media.

With the advent of the internet, we need to direct students' attention to how to evaluate the credibility of web sites as information sources. More recently, these concerns extend to social media.

The challenge of fake news and inaccurate, biased web sites is not new, although concerns over fake news are heightened in the past year. Instructors may want to include formal instruction about how to evaluate the accuracy of information in a news story or on a web site and how to evaluate the credibility of these sources.

The CRAAP Test (2010) identifies six criteria readers should use to evaluate the credibility of information:

- **Currency** of the information (date of posting or publication)
- **Relevance** of information for you needs (consider the intended audience for the information)
- **Authority** of the source (qualifications, potential for bias or conflict of interest)
- **Accuracy** of the content (supported by evidence, peer-reviewed)
- **Purpose** of the message (intended to inform, teach, entertain, persuade, or sell a product?)

FactCheck.org recently published blog posts with guidelines for evaluating the credibility of news stories and information circulated in chain e-mails. FactCheck.org is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. Their guidelines echo the criteria identified in the CRAAP Test:

- Consider the source
- Read beyond headlines for details that might contradict or modify the meaning of the headline
- Evaluate supporting evidence (if any)
- Check the date of publication
- Consider whether the "news" is intended as satire
- Consider your own biases (we tend to be less critical of sources that support our existing beliefs)
- Consult expert authorities to corroborate assertions in the story

FactCheck.org produced a short YouTube video (3:22 min) that summarizes its guidelines for evaluating a social media source. You can use this in class or upload the link to your eLearning class.

If you would like to have a librarian visit your classroom and offer an in-class workshop for your students, contact the reference librarian or information literacy librarian in your campus library.

Resources

CRAAP Test (September 17, 2010). Original test designer's site. Meriam Library, California State University – Chico. http://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf

Robertson, L., & Kiely, E. (November 18, 2016). How to spot fake news. FactCheck.org Retrieved from: <http://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>

Spotting Fake News (December 8, 2016). FactCheck.org. [VIDEO] Retrieved from: <http://www.factcheck.org/2016/12/video-spotting-fake-news/>

Website Research (updated September 15, 2016). Central Michigan University Libraries Libguide. Retrieved from: http://libguides.cmich.edu/web_research/home

The CMU libguide discusses several topics relevant for online information literacy: Evaluating the credibility of web sites (includes the CRAAP Test), using URLs to determine website ownership and credibility, and a discussion of Wikipedia, Open Access Resources, and Google Scholar.

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