Teaching #infolit With Everyday Content

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An information literate person is able to recognize
- a need for information
- where to find and access the needed information
- how to evaluate information
- how to incorporate information into one’s knowledge base
- how to use the information effectively to accomplish one’s purpose in an ethical and legal manner

The question we’re examining and exploring with our initial information literacy instruction is “where do students get their information in their everyday lives?”

Research is now an expectation

We try to convey to our students that the days of low expectations with research are gone; however, we also try to relate that research is done daily, in all walks of life, thus it shouldn’t be intimidating because it’s typical. We’re just translating it to academic scenarios, showing that in those cases, it doesn’t have to be intimidating either.

The cause for panic is understandable. More than likely, students have far more resources available (books, periodicals, databases, media) in college than they did in high school. Because of this, more than likely, they’re entering with a similar background of:
1. Poor/unrefined research practices and abilities
2. Reliance on one source for research (typically, Google)

This is OK, it’s a starting point, and entirely manageable. The task for us as instruction librarians, is to take those prior practices and real-life scenarios and relate them to academic performance. We need to show the student that information literacy is important to everyday life, not just academia.

First, we establish the idea of a network by playing the game of telephone. No matter the course, the “story” doesn’t end up as it started. Why? Well, we take the stance that too many experts were involved, thus a diluted result at the end. How does this apply to real-life? We relate by asking, “where do we have too many experts?”

Even the most information literate student can be exposed to a huge array of misinformation via social media, and often typical news outlets on a daily basis. Friends, family, and non-experts have the chance to become the default “authority” on a subject.

Evaluation is critical

Following a discussion and example of misinformation in everyday lives, we transition to the need to evaluate that information. We use the CRAAP Test, and a handout developed by California State University, Chico. After reviewing the five points of the CRAAP Test, we apply it to real-life misinformation found on social media and the Web.

Now that students are equipped with background on the CRAAP Test, we use real-life Twitter misinformation where they can use the Web and CRAAP Test to verify/invalidate information. They then transition into using the CRAAP Test on a news story. These real-world examples of information evaluation give hands-on experience to the student and helps us transition to academic resource evaluation, which is the focus for our 2nd info lit session.