

How and why to evaluate information

LIB 1201

Wednesday, November 14, 2012

Critically analyzing information sources

- Initial appraisal
 - Author
 - Date, edition/revision
 - Publisher
 - Title
- Content analysis
 - Audience
 - Objective reasoning
 - Coverage
 - Style
 - Evaluative reviews

Evaluating Web Pages

- The URL
 - ~ indicating a personal page
 - Domain, country code
 - Publisher or sponsoring entity – familiar?
- Scan the page for answers
 - About
 - Date
 - Author's credentials
 - Links, footnotes, other documentation

Evaluating Web Pages, continued

- Check Wayback Machine at archive.org
- Google the author
- Truncate the URL back to the domain:

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-when-unwanted-thoughts-take-over/what-are-the-signs-and-symptoms-of-ocd.shtml>

Your criteria for evaluation!

Questions to ask:

- What is the purpose of the site or page?
 - Inform, persuade, sell, etc.
- Is it irony, satire, parody?
- Is it as credible as print sources on the same topic?

Grimmelmann, The Google Dilemma

- Googlebomb & miserable failure
- Talentless hack
- When legitimate searches yield inflammatory results
- Grimmelmann: “search results matter: to culture, to business, to society.”
 - Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

Fister, *The Devil in the Details*

Evaluating sources is a complex and yet very important aspect of how we interact with the multiple streams of conflicting claims that come to us across a diverse set of media channels. Most undergraduates have some familiarity with most media (with the exception of scholarly communication channels), but few are aware of the various dynamics that go into choosing which stories to tell and how claims will be editorially validated. Simply knowing about those processes, however, won't address the need to sort through the many claims and divergent points of view that will be found within any one medium. [

Fister, *The Devil in the Details*

The best solution, possibly the only solution, is to give students many opportunities to develop their own ability to evaluate sources directly through practice. They must have occasion to select, using their own judgment, a wide variety of sources from different media, sort through the differences, develop the rhetorical sophistication to examine evidence used to support claims, and in some form (whether through presentations, papers, or discussion) process what they've found into knowledge of their own. [[45](#)]

Fister, *The Devil in the Details*

Most college students conducting research will struggle to master forms of discourse they will never attempt again beyond their college years. But they will be faced with conundrums in future that will require that they evaluate a variety of perspectives and ultimately come to their own conclusions. Claims based on society-wide anxiety are frequently used to justify any number of political, social, and economic actions. When these anxieties reach fever pitch, the ability to evaluate claims is an important analgesic that, apart from equipping individual students to think independently, has wider implications for the role they might play in future as contributors to responsible social discourse. [[48](#)]

For Monday, November 19

Discussion: Writing an academic research paper

Reading: Badke Ch. 10 and Appendix 1 pp. 235-238

One research journal blog post; prompt follows

Your research paper outline is due on November 21

Your research paper draft is due on November 28

Blog Homework: Research Journal Post

- Over the past few weeks we read about and worked on:
 1. advanced internet searching
 2. searching library catalogs
 3. searching article databases.
- What have you learned in these classes that's new to you?
- How do you see yourself using your new skills outside of our course?