Glendale College Library Information Competencies Workshops
Evaluating Information – Outline

Core Competencies / Learning Outcomes

4. Evaluate information by:
   c. Distinguishing reliable from unreliable sources of information, scholarly and popular sources, substantiated facts and points of view.
   d. Assessing the authority, accuracy... and timeliness of information.

Preparation:

- Distribute the Handout to students (one page – front & back)
- Be ready to display the following items from the workshop CampusGuide, http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/evaluating:
  - Evaluating Sources for Credibility – Video
  - Workshop Post-Quiz

1. Introduction: Introduce yourself and welcome students to the library and the workshop. Take care of bureaucratic business, explaining the attendance roster, sharing the session agenda, and answering questions students may have. (2 minutes)

2. Choosing the best sources (10 minutes)
Pose to students the question: What does the word “credible” mean? Hopefully, some students will volunteer answers such as “trustworthy,” “reputable,” and “believable.” Share with students that today, with so much information available through so many channels, it’s necessary to find the most credible, most believable information available. This applies with books and articles, but especially with information found on the open Internet. Explain that while using Google--or another search engine such as Bing--you need to be extra thoughtful about the information you find, spending extra time on “detective work” to verify the credibility of the information. Then show video on Evaluating Sources for Credibility from North Carolina State University (3:14 minutes).

After video, review with the class page 1 of the handout, “Evaluating Information.” While doing so, refer to Point #2 on the workshop CampusGuide (“Review: Choosing the Best Web Resource”). Posted there is a URL hyperlink (labeled “Which of these sites...?”) to a result list for a Google search on “vaccines virus effectiveness.” Review this list and a selection of one or two of the web pages it recommends so as to demonstrate the value of analyzing website domains and searching for additional clues regarding a web page’s expertise (a.k.a. authority), point of view (a.k.a. bias), and publication date (a.k.a. currency).

3. Student exercise (35 minutes total)
   a) 15 minutes – Students individually complete analysis of Site A or B.
   Divide class into two sets of students; assign one half of students to examine Site A [posted on the workshop CampusGuide: NaturalNews site entitled “HPV and Hepatitis B Vaccines do not prevent...”], and other half of students to examine Site B [also posted on the workshop CampusGuide: PLOS ONE page entitled “Observational Study of Vaccine Efficacy...”]. Instruct students to answer the questions on page 2 of the handout, regarding the site they are assigned to consider. Circulate classroom to assist and coach while students complete exercise.

   b) Class share-out for 20 minutes – 10 minutes for Site A, 10 minutes for Site B.
   Facilitate class discussion regarding what the students discovered about each webpage. Reinforce the “clues” that are on each webpage to suggest its authority, its currency, its objectivity and overall reliability. Use NetSupport software to share discoveries made by individual students with the entire class.
See table below for key strengths and weaknesses of each web page, and be sure to emphasize a selection of them if students themselves fail to bring them up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of Evaluation</th>
<th>Indicators/Clues: NaturalNews.com</th>
<th>Indicators/Clues: journals.plos.org</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXPERTISE/AUTHORITY</td>
<td>Very weak for topic of vaccinations and associated disciplines of medicine/epidemiology. Author Michelle Goldstein has self-described experience as a 'menthal health therapist' but lists no specific degrees or credentials. Refers to her personal website &amp; Facebook pages...hardly scholarly.</td>
<td>Very strong for topic of vaccinations and associated discipline of medicine/epidemiology. 11 authors listed, all associated with respected research institutes such as International Agency for Research on Cancer and Harvard University School of Public Health. Quick Google search of first author shows she earned PhD in Virology—appropriate and strong experience for the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POINT OF VIEW/BIAS</td>
<td>(a) View &quot;About NaturalNews&quot; to see the host organization has an explicitly self-stated mission/bias to “strongly criticize drugs-and-surgeries medicine.” Also view disclaimer at the very bottom of site: “All content posted on this site is commentary or opinion...Information on this site is provided for educational and entertainment purposes only.” (b) Citations/evidence? Very weak. Makes many claims (&quot;Research has shown that...&quot;) and shares some statistics, but fails to formally cite sources for either. Sources listed at end of article circle back to NaturalNews.com or do not provide hyperlinks. Overall = point of view is biased.</td>
<td>(a) Per links at top of page (&quot;About&quot; &gt; &quot;Journal Information&quot;), PLOS ONE is a &quot;multidisciplinary Open Access journal&quot; whose content undergoes “Rigorous Peer Review” before publication. Emphasize/explain how the process of peer-review helps to filter out unqualified or biased authors. Also, active links to the journal’s “Editors” and “Editorial Board” show dozens of editors with highly-respected credentials. (b) Citations/evidence? Very strong. Every claim or statistic is immediately cited, and the sources referred to are other scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. Includes full list of 43 references at close of article. Overall = point of view is unbiased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION DATE/CURRENCY</td>
<td>Article/content posted June 18, 2013. Five years old – current enough for medical topics, since research takes time to execute, verify, and publish.</td>
<td>Article/content published March 22, 2013. Five years old – current enough for medical topics, since research takes time to execute, verify, and publish.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Students complete Post-Quiz (5 minutes)
Direct students to the link for the Post-Quiz included on the workshop CampusGuide, http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/evaluating, and ask them to answer the questions posted there.

Encourage students to take other workshops and/or Library credit classes such as LIB 100 to further improve their research skills.