Glendale College Library Information Competencies Workshops

Credible Source Types – Outline

**GCC Core Competencies / Learning Outcomes**

1. Recognize the need for information and define a research topic by:
   - d. Identifying the types of materials that are appropriate for the project.
2. Develop and implement an effective search strategy appropriate for an information need by:
   - a. Differentiating among various types of information sources…and recognizing the purpose of each.
3. Evaluate information by:
   - d. Assessing the authority, accuracy…[and] reliability…of information.

**ACRL Framework alignment**

Guiding Frame: Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Guiding Knowledge Practices:
- [Students] use…indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility.
- [Students] recognize that authoritative content may be packaged formally or informally and may include sources of all media types.

**Guiding Instructional Question:**

How do you determine the credibility of a source?
[Especially through consideration of its *authorship* and *evidence*]

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**Preparation**

- Distribute copies of the *Credible Source Types* handout
- Open the webpage (CampusGuide) created for the *Credible Source Types* workshop: [http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/sourcetypes](http://campusguides.glendale.edu/libworkshops/sourcetypes)
- Open the *Credible Source Types* Powerpoint slide presentation (linked on the CampusGuide)
- Open up Net Support if you plan to use it. (Note: Net Support does *not* work well with the animated slides in the Powerpoint, nor while co-browsing web pages. We suggest you simply project everything on the main front screen.)

**1. Introduction (3 minutes).**
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. Information Cycle video (3 minutes)**
Explain that information is available through many channels today—almost too many! This workshop will help students understand the differences between source types, and understand why some source types are considered more credible (believable and respectable) than others.

Explain that information follows a progression or cycle as time passes following an event, which will be demonstrated in a quick video to start the workshop. Show the video, linked on the Workshop CampusGuide.

**3. Review Source Type chart (25 minutes)**
Direct student attention to the chart of *Source Type Qualities*; it is printed on the first page of the student Handout, as well as on the CampusGuide. Ask students to skim the chart, explaining that it elaborates on many of the sources introduced in the video, moving from early in the Information Cycle (Internet sources), to later in the Cycle (scholarly journals and books). Point out that the chart identifies specific
qualities of each source, such as the source type’s Purpose, Authorship, Evidence, and Other characteristics (such as its typical length, how routinely the item is published, and what sort of language it typically uses). Allow students 1-2 minutes to skim the chart. Yes—that’s fast! This is a brief introduction to the next 20 minutes of activity, during which students will engage more deeply with these sources and their identifying qualities.

Next, use the animated Powerpoint slides (linked on the CampusGuide) to Review each of the source types described on the chart. The slides are designed as a sort of “Name That Source Type” game. When the instructor clicks a slide, four different identifying qualities will appear one at a time, that briefly address the authorship, publishing period, purpose, and evidence which are typical for the given source type. Ask students to consult the chart on their Handout and make a verbal guess regarding which source type is being described, and finally click to reveal the source type. Then click to view the following slide which provides a number of graphic examples of the source type, as well as an active hyperlink to one specific source-item that you can open to demonstrate the level of evidence typically associated with that source type.

This part of the Workshop requires you to narrate and explain in some detail the differences between source types, plus display one model of each source to point out the strength (or weakness) of its authorship and evidence. During the workshop, it’s recommended that you print a copy of the Powerpoint slides with the Notes section visible to help guide your comments. To do this, open the slides in Powerpoint, go to the View command, change it to “Notes Page,” then print at least slides #3, 5, 7, 9.

Consider the following as you narrate this part of the Workshop (these are more extensive descriptions of the points listed in the Notes on the slides):

- The slide for **Social Media, Blogs & Aggregator Sites** displays the following descriptors.
  - These are written by common citizens, freelance writers, and/or editorial staff.
  - They’re published very quickly following an event—often the same day.
  - They’re intended to provide snapshots of the news and current events.
  - They summarize or link to other sources; little additional evidence.

The example slide that follows includes logos for such aggregator sites as Huffington Post, Vox, and BuzzFeed. Be familiar with these aggregator sites, and be ready to explain their primary purpose: to aggregate or collect brief headlines about current events for easy & entertaining consumption. The slide offers several synonyms and analogies to help students understand what an aggregator site is (including “collections,” “compilations,” “sharing platforms,” “digests,” “newsy blogs”). Be ready with your own explanation, emphasizing that aggregators do not often provide original reporting that is thoroughly fact-checked. These sources do not include much, if any, direct evidence (quotations from witnesses, participants, or experts); they simply link to the original reporting source (usually, a news or magazine source).

On this slide the logo for Huffington Post is an active hyperlink that will open in your web browser an article on the Life website (a sub-brand of Huffington Post) entitled “Butter vs. Margarine: Which is Better for You (and for Baking)?” Please point out the following to students…

- Although the name of the hosting site appears to be Life, the source website is, in fact, the Huffington Post (an aggregator site). It requires some detective work to discern this, which students should “always” engage in when dealing with content on the open Web. Demonstrate how to read the host URL (in this case, it’s www.huffpost.com), and how to search at the top or bottom of the page for information “About” the site (none provided for this content—not awesome) and/or copyright credit (which for this content names/suggests “HuffPost, an Oath brand” and “HuffPost Taste”).

Page 2 of 6  
Rev. Winter 2019
The author named for the content is Joseph Erdos. Besides being a named contributor for Huffington Post, his expertise is unknown. For this topic, it would be better if the author were a degreed journalist, or someone with expertise on health and diet (such as a doctor or nutritionist).

The evidence is very weak. The article makes a number of claims, but provides no supporting evidence for those claims from subject experts or published research.

- The 2nd paragraph makes two claims in quick succession, that “One tablespoon of butter contains 30 milligrams of cholesterol and 7 grams of saturated fat” and also that “your daily intake of saturated fat should be no more than 15 grams.” These are very specific numbers/data - according to what source? No sources named.
- Recommends in paragraph 7 to “Avoid stick margarine…which has the highest trans fat, about 2 grams per tablespoon,” and provides a link to support claim that “the USDA does not recommend consuming any trans fats.” But the link is bad. It *does* redirect to www.fns.usda.gov, but shares message that “Page not found.”

The next slides conjoin popular periodicals as News Sources & Magazines, and display the following descriptors.

- These are written by journalists, freelance writers, and/or editorial staff.
- They’re published quickly following an event—within one day, one week, or one month.
- They’re intended to share original, fact-checked reporting.
- They interview witnesses & subject experts, or summarize outside research.

The example slide that follows includes logos or covers for a wide variety of historically respected news sources (Los Angeles Times, New York Times, NPR, etc.) and magazines (Newsweek, National Geographic, etc.). Emphasize the differences between news sources & magazines—that news sources are published/updated daily, magazines are published/updated weekly or monthly; that news articles are often only 1-2 pages in length, magazine articles may be slightly longer. Emphasize similarities, too: That both are written by trained journalists, who have usually earned degrees in Journalism and who follow a strict process to check facts and sources before publication. Both include original, first-run reporting; both are aimed at the general population as audience. Also: Both generally name specific evidence in the story, such as quotations from witnesses, event participants, or experts.

On this slide, the logo near the center of the slide for MSNBC is an active hyperlink that will open in your web browser an article on nbcnews.com entitled “Using Vegetable Oils to Lower Cholesterol May Not Improve Longevity.” Please point out the following to students…

- The source is NBC (National Broadcasting Company), a news organization established in 1925 that employs journalists to do original reporting and to fact-check sources before publication.
- The author is Madelyn Fernstrom, with strong expertise as described on the webpage. She is named as NBC News Health and Nutrition Editor. She also holds a PhD doctoral degree—very unique for news reporters. A quick Google search shows that she is a Board certified Nutrition Specialist and a Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. All her experience is directly relevant to health and nutrition.
- The evidence is stronger, naming specific details about a study and quoting a subject expert to back-up the claims it makes that reducing saturated fat in a diet may not reduce the risk of death from heart disease.
  - Paragraphs 4-5-6-7 describe in some detail the methodology of a “new report.”
  - Paragraph 7 explicitly states that the authors of the study are "researchers from the National Institutes of Health and University of North Carolina," both highly respected organizations in fields of health and medicine.
Paragraph 10 quotes "cardiologist Dr. Steve Nissen, chair of cardiovascular medicine at the Cleveland Clinic." Cardiology, as the study of heart-disease, is extremely relevant subject expertise for the topic under consideration.

- The next slide is for **Scholarly, Peer-reviewed Journals** and displays the following descriptors.
  - These are written by scholars and experts with Master's degrees & PhDs in a specialized field.
  - They’re published quarterly or biannually.
  - They’re intended to share results of an original study and/or deep analysis.
  - They include methodology, data, and long list of references to other research.

The example slide that follows includes a few covers of open-source scholarly journals (Advances in Language & Literary Studies, Social Science Journal, and BMJ-The British Medical Journal). After a moment, the first page of an article appears from the BMJ-British Medical Journal, entitled "Re-evaluation of the Traditional Diet-heart Hypothesis: Analysis of Recovered Data from Minnesota Coronary Experiment (1968-73)."

The image of this article is an active hyperlink that will open in your web browser the full-text of the article on bmj.com. Please point out the following to students…

- **The source** is BMJ, the British Medical Journal, an international peer reviewed medical journal with archives back to 1840. Items published here are written by scholars & experts in medical fields, for their peers—other medical scholars & experts—to read.
- **The authors** are a full team of 10 scientists, professors, and researchers, all with strong expertise in health and medical fields. The author affiliations listed on the left of the 1st page show that they are epidemiologists, biostatisticians, and medical researchers at the National Institutes of Health, University of North Carolina, and the Mayo Clinic, among other locations—all highly respected organizations in fields of health and medicine.
- **The evidence** is very strong, since it is a scholarly, peer-reviewed article that provides all details regarding the original study named in the NBC article—the original source material!
  - It’s 17 pages long. So many pages needed to fully document the exact methodology of the study conducted. Includes many charts and tables to share the results discovered.
  - At very end (pp.16-17) almost 80 other works of research are cited in long list of references.
  - Additionally, a DOI (digital object identifier) number is listed at the bottom of all pages; another quality that is unique to scholarly, peer-reviewed articles only.

- The last slides are for **Books** and display the following descriptors.
  - These are written by experts on specialized topics.
  - They’re published one time following years of research, writing, and editing.
  - They’re intended to give a lengthy, thorough examination of a topic.
  - They may include in-depth interviews, analysis of research, and citations.

Explain that books focus on thorough writing & undergo an editing process that takes years; they’re published only one time—they’re not periodicals—after multiple revisions and edits.

The example slide that follows includes a few covers of books and logos for university presses. The last book cover on the right side of the slide is a book entitled The Queen of Fats.

The image of this book is an active hyperlink that will open in your web browser a copy of the e-book. The photo of the author, beneath the book cover, is an active hyperlink that will open in your web browser the author's biographical web page. Please point out the following to students…
The source is a book published by University of California Press as shown on title page & copyright page (pp. 4-5); this is a well-respected university publication.

The author has many publications and has earned awards for her writing over the past 40 years. She’s published five books and written for a number of publications such as the New York Times and Audubon magazine.

The evidence is quite strong, including 33 pages of notes and references (on pp.124-147) for the facts cited in the book.

4. What-and-Why to Believe? Scenarios (20 minutes)

Ask students to read the three claims about what can help or hurt with getting a good night’s sleep.

CLAIM A Practicing yoga can improve sleep for people suffering insomnia.
CLAIM B Spending more money on a new bed mattress won't improve your sleep.
CLAIM C Playing didgeridoo can improve sleep by decreasing snoring.

Note: You may need to play a few seconds of the linked video to illustrate what a didgeridoo is (it’s a musical instrument from Australia made of a hollowed branch that makes a harmonic rumble when played).

After reading all the claims, take a quick poll of students (by a show of hands in the air): Which claim do they find most credible/believable? Which claim do they find most incredible/unbelievable? Ask students to remember this instinctive/gut reaction for later.

Use a “jig-saw” strategy for the activity that follows: Assign each row to focus on one of the three claims: A, B, or C. Students in each row may work independently or in pairs. Ask students to click through the hyperlink for that claim and examine its source of publication, then answer the following questions by completing page 2 on their Handout…

2. What about the author and evidence makes the source believable (or not)?
3. Would you use the source in a college assignment? Why or why not?

Give students 10 minutes to skim the source they’re assigned to consider and answer the questions on the Handout, page 2. Instructor should take a moment to aid students working with Claim B, by counseling them to focus on paragraphs 6-10 and the paragraphs immediately following, and answer Handout questions based primarily on these paragraphs.

After students have had 10 minutes to work on the handout, conduct a 10-minute class share-out of their discoveries. Invite students to share what they discovered about each of the three sources, with a focus on the authorship and evidence of each one. Hopefully students will note the following points; if not, please bring attention to…

Claim A [about yoga improving sleep]:
- Source = Life, a sub-brand of the aggregator site Huffington Post. Webpages (and social media) are the first in the Information Cycle; they are the lowest on the Source Type chart; their purpose is primarily to entertain.
- Author = Julie Christopher, “One of the world’s preeminent Business Intuition Consultants.” Not a trained journalist, not a sleep scientist—no subject expertise.
- Evidence = None provided to support claim. First sentence says “Research has found that yoga could be a cure for insomnia,” but nowhere in the piece is a study named or linked to. One link is provided to CDC (Centers for Disease Control) but it directs only to the general website, not specific statistics about sleep disorders nor a specific study regarding yoga & sleep. Only offers personal testimony in ¶ 3: “What I’ve discovered is that through consistency of practicing yoga…[people] returned to their natural…sleep cycle after many years of suffering from insomnia.” Not scientific evidence, not convincing.

Claim B [about expensive mattresses improving sleep]:
- Source = a newspaper, Los Angeles Times. Later in the Information Cycle; middle range on the Source Type chart; purpose is primarily to inform.
- Author = journalist who has additionally published in New York Times.
- Evidence = better. Three sleep scientists are directly quoted.
  ¶ 6: James Wyatt, director of the Sleep Disorders Center at Rush University Medical Center
  ¶ 11: Howard Levy, assistant professor at the Emory University School of Medicine
  ¶ 14: Helene A. Emsellem, clinical professor of neurology at George Washington University and director of the Center for Sleep and Wake Disorders

Claim C [about didgeridoos improving sleep by decreasing snoring]:
- Source = a scholarly journal, British Medical Journal. Latest (along with books) in the Information Cycle; highest (along with books) on the Source Type chart; purpose is to share new scholarship with other subject experts.
- Author = scientists/doctors/researchers: a research fellow, resident in internal medicine, sleep laboratory technician, specialists in respiratory and sleep medicine, all of who work at University of Zurich and/or major Swiss health institutes.
- Evidence = best. It’s an original study with methodology thoroughly described, results shared via charts & data, and many citations provided to complementary research. Because of its depth of evidence, it’s also the longest of the three sources (5 full pages when printed as PDF).

Before moving on to the Post-Quiz, re-do a quick poll of the students. Ask students to indicate (by a show of hands in the air): Which claim do they now feel is the most believable, based on the credibility of the source where the claim is published? Compare the new results to the first vote. Note that it’s important not to make too fast an instinctive judgment about information and its credibility, especially what you see on the Internet. Try not to go with your first, personal, gut reactions. It’s critical that you dig deeper to consider the source’s author, evidence, and purpose. Also note that libraries provide easy access to the most credible sources—such as periodical articles, journal articles, and books—through databases and catalogs. Encourage students to take other GCC Library workshops focused on “Library Databases” and “Library Catalogs” for additional tips on how to efficiently locate the best sources, or ask for help at the Reference Desk.

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

Encourage students to take other workshops and/or Library credit classes such as LIB 190 or LIB 191 to further improve their research skills.