

Communicating Media Literacy

The Problem

Students are spending considerable time online seeking information or learning using the internet. While the internet provides a wealth of knowledge at one's fingertips, it is also prone to mis/ disinformation and this is getting worse with each passing day. Students are frequently presented with fake news that is disguised professionally to appear credible. Research studies have shown that students are not equipped to evaluate the content that they come across on the internet. They find it difficult to distinguish reliable information from falsehoods.

One way to address the problem

Students need to develop civic online reasoning and a critical thinking mind-set when navigating the internet (MIT TSL, 2020). Professional fact checkers rely on several strategies—of these, two simple yet effective strategies are Click Restraint and Lateral Reading (SHEG, 2019).

Click Restraint

When evaluating online information, resist the urge to immediately click on the first or second search result. Go beyond the first page.

Before clicking on a search result examine:

- **The URL**
- **The Title**
- **The Information Snippet**

Lateral Reading

When evaluating online information, leave the website to see what other digital sources say about it. Open multiple tabs and try to research the author or the website. Find out who it is intended for and why?

Consider the questions:

- Who is providing the information?
- What is the evidence?
- What do other sources say?

Google

climate change

x

🔊

🔍

URL



<https://www.un.org> > sustainabledevelopment > climate-ch... ⋮

Title



Climate Change - United Nations Sustainable Development

Information Snippet



Climate change is affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives. Weather patterns are changing, ...
22-Sept-2019 · Uploaded by World Meteorological Organization - WMO

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Image Courtesy: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/clipart-cartoon-pencil-stationery-2798937/>

Recently a friend of yours, Rahul, shared a video about how the ‘Moon Landing’ was faked and staged by NASA. The video suggested that the public were misled into believing the landings happened, when in fact there were irregularities in the records and inconsistencies with the missions. While the moon landing hoax has been disproved, the video championed the conspirators. Some friends’ reactions to the video included 😊, 🤔, LOL and even ‘Hmmm!’. But a common friend was convinced and further shared it with his hobby group.

Rahul has been struggling with misinformation on the internet. So, here is an opportunity for you to practice your media literacy skills and debunk fake news. **Design a poster to communicate the concept of any one of the two strategies (Click Restraint OR Lateral Reading) to help Rahul.**

Think of the posters you have seen—some inform you about saving water or recycling waste, while others convey the rules of traffic. You need to visually explain the method of fact-checking. Use examples and combination of text and visuals. Your poster should have a title. Remember to make it interesting as well as informative!

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Background

Today's world has us all drowning in a sea of information. Information may not always be true and we find ourselves fighting an infodemic (UN, 2020; WHO, 2020). An infodemic is defined as a tsunami of information—some accurate, some not. Students might find it difficult to deal with this situation (Breakstone et al., 2019). As a result, not only can they be harmed by mis/ disinformation but they may also spread the fake news. Misinformation is false information that is shared without awareness—an honest mistake. However, disinformation involves an intention to mislead (Vosloo, 2021). The spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories that contradict established scientific findings are a cause of concern and call for increased science literacy. It is important for students to know how the scientific community produces scientific information, how media repackages and shares the information and how individuals encounter and form opinions on information (Howell & Brossard, 2021).

Media literacy can address this issue to a great extent. Media literacy is the process of critically assessing information found on the internet amongst other sources. It can teach students how to evaluate and think critically about the messages they receive and to recognise falsehoods (Moyer, 2022). The first part of the activity focuses on building this critical thinking skill among students while the second part focuses on enhancing their communication skills. The latter also requires organising information into a coherent cognitive representation using words and pictures to make connections and encourages active learning (Mayer, 2019).

This resource was developed as part of the internship project of Ms. Natasha Mujgule at the D&T Education Group, HBCSE.

References

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