ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES TO TEACH NEWS LITERACY
Kendra Auberry • Indian River State College

Introduction

Applying the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education to the ‘fake news’ phenomenon provides instructors and librarians opportunities to increase students’ understanding of information sources, provides all students a voice in the current debate on authority, and increases students’ ability to evaluate and ethically use information for academic and personal gains.

The Framework consists of six concepts which were adopted by ACRL in 2010:
- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

Since the creation of the Framework, librarians and educators have been increasing their efforts to apply active learning strategies across multiple disciplines to increase the information and digital literacy skills of college students. Three personal examples which focus on news literacy which will be shared include:
- Allowing students in English Composition (ENC1101) to evaluate the authority of a source by providing guided practice using Guide-on-the-Side tutorial software to create a customized student experience requiring students to apply the RADAR technique for evaluation of a news source.
- The exploration of how information is generated and for what purpose utilizing portions (slides, videos, and discussion questions) of the open source curriculum created at the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University to encourage American Government (PDS1041) students to visualize the different “information neighborhoods” that they may find themselves in and when to be cautious.
- Utilizing the ECHO Active Learning Platform (ALP) to walk Biology Junior Seminar (BSC3931) students through the information cycle and use the live polling features of the ALP to reinforce application of how authority of a source by providing guided practice using Guide-on-the-Side tutorial software to create a customized student experience requiring students to apply the RADAR technique for evaluation of a news source.

The ECHOALP Active Learning Platform is a lecturer capture solution that allows for the live or on demand recording of lecture, audio, and video during a lesson and provides an interactive learning environment where students can interact with course content, peers, and instructor. Students can view the instructor’s PowerPoint presentation, participate in activity slides or polling questions, take notes, ask questions, bookmark slides for later review, and build a study guide. There are currently over 100 classrooms across four campuses that are equipped to use ECHOALP, including the library computer labs at the Mann and Pointe Campuses. A librarian schedules recordings with the teaching team when an instructional research session is scheduled with a librarian in a library computer lab. The teaching team member sets up the recording, which can be accessed through the library’s Blackboard Organization as a link that a course instructor can install in their Blackboard classroom. The librarian adds presentation slides and activities prior to the session. When students come to the library, they log into the Blackboard Ask IRSC Librarians organization and find the link to their class session.

The librarian uses the immediate feedback from polling answers to check for understanding of lesson topics and adjust the lesson for that day. She is also able to make changes to the slides and activities for future classes. She uses the information provided from the students about their research project to conduct follow-up inquiries with students with who questions or who needed further assistance.

Embedded Blackboard Modules

Librarian Kendra Auberry designed a news literacy module as her final project in the online teaching and learning class she took at the University of Central Florida in spring 2017. She shared this module with a few instructors at Indian River State College to see if anyone would be interested in piloting the module. Three instructors agreed to test the module in fall 2017. These sections of English Composition (ENC1011), one section of American Government (PDS1041) and one section of World History (WOR2040) currently have the graded module embedded in their courses. Kendra interacts with students and grades work in this module. Students are asked to watch videos, engage in tutorials created with Guide-on-the-Side, read short amounts of text, participate in a discussion board, and analyze a news story of their own choosing along with creating a fake news headline related to that same topic. Feedback has been positive from students and instructors.

Kendra has seen an increase in student questions this semester and the ability to spend face-to-face time focused on hands-on activities rather than point and click instruction. It remains to be seen if any improvement in the quality of the course final research projects can be attributed to interaction with the module.

Future Considerations

Games for Middle School Students

The process of explaining the difference between legitimate news stories and fake news via creating fake news versions themselves has produced a large amount of creative material that could be used to help younger audiences become discerning news consumers. A game using the headlines created by the students from the Blackboard News Literacy module is in the works geared towards middle school age children. Two Port St. Lucie middle school classrooms are willing to test the game upon completion. The project is still in the research phase, with a LibGuide serving as a place to curate the best resources already in existence in order to avoid duplication of effort and create something unique.

Service Learning Project

There is interest with faculty who are a part of the Service Learning Professional Learning Community to incorporate news literacy as a topic within service learning projects that students complete as part of courses in a variety of disciplines, offering options for students to evaluate and curate content on class topics. Also in the works are plans to have college students teach evaluation techniques to younger students in some type of college-sponsored venue.

Literature Review


