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Media Literacy: A Moving Target — pg 16
Welcome to the beginning of a new school year and this issue of *Knowledge Quest* on media literacy. Both things represent a fresh start, new energy, and new thoughts about ways of learning.

Speaking of new... Over the summer, I was a member of a number of interview teams for school library positions open in my district. I typically, along with principals, ask questions that you might expect in an interview:

- How do you collaborate and coteach with educators?
- How do you build parent involvement and communication?
- Tell us why you think you are the best applicant for this job.
- How does the school librarian personalize learning for all learners?

But one of my favorites was shared with me by a colleague, “Who is responsible for learning?”

Now for my next favorite question, “How have you become better?”

This question was new to me until this summer and was shared by one of our principals. It quickly jumped to the top of my list of best-ever interview questions. As you read the following, consider your own answers.

As I was researching media literacy for this column, I came across a brilliant article in a 2012 issue of *Knowledge Quest* by Howard Rheingold who commented as he discussed digital literacies:

Participatory culture, in which citizens feel and exercise the agency of being cocreators of their culture and not just passive consumers of culture created by others, depends on widespread literacies of participation. You can’t participate without knowing how. And cultural participation depends on a social component that is not easily learned alone or from a manual. That’s where school libraries and school librarians have a critically important part to play.

Rheingold’s work resonated with me in 2012 and is certainly prophetic today.

These past few years have been busy ones for the largest professional school library association in the world. Talk about being conversant in multiple literacies needed in a participatory culture and school librarians playing an important part in that role—we, as professionals, are doing just that! As I think about the past few years in AASL history, it is clear that media literacy and participatory culture have been prevalent in all things AASL. Take a look at the emphasis on media literacy laced throughout past president Audrey Church’s presidential initiative, *School Librarians as Learning Leaders* (AASL 2017). A variety of literacies are highlighted in the ”The Strategic Leadership Role of
So let’s go back to my two favorite interview questions:

• Who is responsible for learning? I firmly believe that, ultimately, the answer is us as school librarians. We are, after all, the constant in the room. We bring it every day. We empower and engage learners. We teach them and support them as they Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage. We build the Learner-Ready School Library.

• How have you become better? Take a few minutes to think about your own personal qualities and expertise. Your own learning. Your own passion. You grow every day in your school library by collaborating in the participatory culture that is a school library. You create the Learner-Ready School Library.

Let this issue of Knowledge Quest inspire how you answer these two questions as you think about multiple literacies and the learners you serve.

Welcome to the 2018–2019 school year! Join me as we transform teaching and learning by being Learner-Ready School Librarians!

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It seems as though the “truth” is both everywhere you look and impossible to find. From news to magazines—and even advertisements—we are constantly bombarded with information that forces us to repeatedly ask ourselves: “Is it real, or is it fake?” The prevalence and widespread availability of (dis)information is not a new phenomenon. Back in the golden age of mix tapes, in the 1970s and 1980s, the media supply company Memorex had a slogan that asked, “Is it live, or is it Memorex?” The company proposed that its audio recordings were so crisp and clear, that one could not tell the difference between a recording and a live performance (Computer History Museum 2005). Just like the audio in that Memorex commercial, sometimes it is difficult to discern real news from fake.

Distinguishing between real and fake information is a complex process that requires a nuanced approach to the idea of objective truth. For every event, there are multiple interpretations all presented as the “truth,” but each is merely a version of the truth colored by the inherent biases of the person telling the story. It is challenging for adults to sort through the data and find the “real” story—and even more so for adolescents.

The groundbreaking 2016 Stanford University study assessing news literacy in youth (Wineburg et al. 2016) showed that students need more support and practice developing the critical-thinking skills needed to navigate the digital landscape. In the study, thousands of students from middle school through college were asked to complete a series of tasks, including comparing and contrasting posts from the comment sections of a newspaper, differentiating between fake and authentic social media accounts, verifying controversial claims, and assessing the credibility of websites in an open search. The results were disappointing, though not a complete surprise, particularly to those of us who work with this population of students regularly. Although this particular age group of young people may appear able to navigate the digital world with an ease and fluency that can only come from early exposure to technology, in reality, students are often much less skilled at evaluating the accuracy of the information they find. The study indicated that less than 20 percent of middle school students could distinguish between ads and reality, concluding that the future outlook for our society was bleak, at best.

At this critical juncture, school librarians are poised to prove their immeasurable value and worth as educators once again. As a profession, librarians are particularly well qualified to fill this need for students by helping them discern fact from fiction, truth from misrepresentation. Students and staff are looking to school librarians more and more for tools and resources to discern the accuracy and validity of news and information. As such, the theme of this issue of Knowledge Quest is the tools and resources needed to combat fake news. Although many
scholars and educators have previously addressed the concept of fake news, particularly in the context of social media and youth, this issue focuses more specifically on the ways in which school librarians can enact change by embracing their role as leaders in the development of multiple literacy skills that students need to critically evaluate information.

In “Heuristics: An Approach to Evaluating News Obtained through Social Media,” Ann Ewbank, associate professor at Montana State University, and Spencer Johnson, a recent doctoral graduate from Montana State University, describe how heuristics, or “rules of thumb,” may be used to quickly evaluate news obtained through social media. They promote the role of the school librarian in providing professional development to teachers in order to integrate these skills into the curriculum.

Hannah Byrd Little, director of the Webb School Library and Archives, teams up with journalism professor Dr. Robert Byrd in “Media Literacy: A Moving Target” to discuss ways to critically read news and spot quality responsible journalism, regardless of the format. They posit that, with ever-changing technologies and the prevalence of news delivered through social media, news media literacy can seem like a moving target. They offer practical techniques and strategies to encourage everyone to become more discerning consumers of information.

In her article “There’s So Much There! Helping Kids Conquer the Internet and Save Democracy,” high school librarian and author Angie Miller explores how school librarians can help students become more confident researchers by modeling the search process and providing them with exemplars and approaches they can use independently. Taking a practical approach based on her own experiences, Angie provides useful strategies and resources that can make researching a less confusing activity for students.

Mica Johnson, a middle school librarian in Tennessee, shares how she utilized the Shared Foundations and Key Commitments from AASL’s National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries to revamp her website evaluation lessons to build more comprehensive fake news lessons for students. Mica provides a blueprint for other librarians and educators interested in creating a more rigorous and exciting approach to dealing with the flood of questionable information that students face.

Fake news is not an issue that is going to disappear anytime soon. Librarians have long combatted misinformation and disinformation; at times they may have felt like the only discerning voice in the storm of multiple truths. Unlike the “Is it live, or is it Memorex?” question, the “Is it real, or is it fake?” question is not as easily answered. As school librarians continue to embrace their role as leaders in their schools and districts, users of information will continue to rely on them as a critical resource in their quest for truth.

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An Approach to Evaluating News Obtained through Social Media
News Obtained through Social Media: A New Frontier

The increasing ubiquity of social media is fundamentally changing the way we access and interpret current events and news. The era of the print newspaper, evening news on only three television channels, and the radio as a popular go-to source for breaking news is in decline. In this new era of information abundance, we have added unlimited news sources—cable news channels, blogs, and news found on social media. According to Elisa Shearer and Jeffrey Gottfried, two-thirds of Americans now read some portion of the news on their social media feeds such as Facebook and Twitter (2017). In addition, a Pew Research study indicates that 95 percent of American teens have access to a smartphone and 45 percent report that they use it almost constantly (Anderson and Jiang 2018). When using their smartphones, these teens are likely accessing social media feeds where they sift through entertainment and sports news, pictures of family and friends, and serious news about the world. For these social media feeds, a consumer of news uses an array of skills to determine credibility and process a huge amount of information. But who has taught us to evaluate this information on social media?

School librarians and teachers use and teach systematic processes to determine the credibility of news in academic situations, in which students typically learn how to determine a topic or research question, evaluate the information, and, finally, create a product that synthesizes what they have learned. Among the more popular approaches are the Information Search Process (Kuhlthau et al. 1990) and the Big6 (Eisenberg and Berkowitz 2017). Furthermore, the AASL Standards Framework for Learners (AASL 2018) provides the underlying foundation upon which to build systematic information-seeking processes. These processes are effective means to conduct in-depth research, but do teens encountering the news through social media approach what they read in the same manner? Can we expect teens to take the time to use a systematic process each time they come across news on social media?

Heuristics: A Decision-Making Process for Use in Real Time

The context in which teens come across news every day has changed. One can reasonably infer that teens are obtaining much of their information about current events on their smartphones. When teens use these devices, do they critically analyze each piece of information as they would for a research assignment? We argue that they do not. As an educational leader and an educator of school librarians, we know that we certainly do not. Rather, we argue that both teens and adults can use heuristics, which are a set of low-level cognitive decision-making processes that lead to an interpretation or conclusion. Applied to this context, heuristics are rules of thumb that are developed over the course of interactions with news obtained through social media.

For example, a teen might see a news article that has ten thousand “likes” or one thousand “comments,” which might be interpreted as an endorsement of credibility. Perhaps the teen has seen a trusted friend or family member “share” a piece of information. This heuristic utilizes specific credibility cues (a clue that a person can use to determine the trustworthiness of information) because they may indicate that the information is trustworthy. While some may think of using this heuristic for determining credibility of news obtained through social media as trusting someone else’s judgment (which may be faulty), the heuristic may be quite useful for determining the credibility of entertainment news or milestones in a person’s life such as a marriage or the birth of a child. There is a wide array of heuristics—of varying value—that a teen can employ when evaluating information on social media in real time.

Importance of Context in Social Media

Understanding the context in which teens obtain information allows educators to prepare their students for the rapid-fire world of information and news on social media. While the government and social media companies are actively addressing and attempting to eliminate misinformation on social media, students must also understand their roles as evaluators of information and misinformation. Pushing the responsibility of news evaluation onto government and social media companies is not enough. To sift with fidelity and competency through the tremendous amount of information attained through social media, teens must have an understanding of how to quickly evaluate news. This means teaching context-specific skills that students can use in real time, in addition to teaching students systematic approaches to research. Schools must continually adapt to changes in technology, and teaching students real-time approaches to evaluating news obtained through social media is an extension of this philosophy.
Content, Motivation, and Credibility Cues: Setting the Stage for Evaluation of News Obtained through Social Media

Our recent study (conducted by Spencer Johnson and supervised by Ann Ewbank) (2018) has established three underlying concepts that school librarians and teachers should address before teaching students how to use heuristics to evaluate news obtained through social media in real time: content, motivation, and credibility cues. First, educators should understand and discuss the different ways their students obtain information. As discussed previously, within the context of social media, there are many different types of information, and each type requires a distinct skill set for evaluation. For information obtained through social media, these concepts will set the stage for students’ evaluation of factual and misleading news.

Content. One of the most important components when evaluating news for trustworthiness is understanding the underlying concepts relevant to the news item or current event. For news obtained through social media that is political, students should have a basic understanding of the role and function of government, especially if they are approaching voting age. For example, when students encounter news from social media about the passage of a mill levy, they must ask themselves if they even understand what it means and how it will impact them. Students must learn to engage their prior knowledge or seek context to inform their opinion. Therefore, we recommend that content can be connected to real news that students will inevitably encounter on social media. School librarians and teachers should continue to incorporate authentic content into curriculum so that students have an understanding of the underlying concepts of news and current events.

Motivation. When teaching about propaganda, school librarians and teachers should discuss bias and how messaging plays into these biases. For students to effectively navigate all of the information that they come across, they should be aware of their own biases. Rather than discussing bias as a problem, educators should teach students to be aware of biases and to learn to push back against these biases so learners are not manipulated into believing or not believing information based on the person or entity posting that information on social media. We must teach students that social media feeds can create “echo chambers” that play on biases and motivations. Therefore, teaching students that they have biases and then teaching them how to recognize their biases is a tremendously important skill that will assist learners in evaluating information.

Credibility Cues. Credibility cues are pieces of evidence that indicate the trustworthiness of a social media post. For example, if a social media

Pushing the responsibility of news evaluation onto government and social media companies is not enough. To sift with fidelity and competency through the tremendous amount of information obtained through social media, teens must have an understanding of how to quickly evaluate news.
post has ten thousand "likes," should we believe the evidence to be true? Many of us might answer with a resounding "NO" because social endorsements may be unreliable. How do our students know this? Who has had this conversation with them? What should we look at to determine credibility? Spencer’s survey of secondary teachers produced two general types of credibility cues that secondary teachers believe to be the best options to look at when addressing the credibility of news obtained through social media. Students must look at the reputation of the author of the information and must determine if they can confirm the information elsewhere (Johnson 2018). Social media contexts produce social endorsements that may be construed as credible evidence. For example, students may look at the number of "likes" on a post to determine whether it is credible. Though social endorsements such as "likes" may be an excellent way to determine if a piece of music is good, we found that teachers do not believe that social endorsements are as effective as looking at the reputation of the author, and then confirming the information elsewhere (Johnson 2018).

Social Media Credibility Heuristic

Little evidence has been found to suggest that students are being explicitly taught how to evaluate news obtained through social media. Our research indicated that in addition to the current systematic approaches used to teach students how to evaluate information, a social media credibility heuristic may be a pragmatic tool that students can use while browsing social media (2018). While systematic processes are clearly more rigorous, it is unrealistic to expect students to systematically analyze every piece of news that they come across, so a heuristic (rule of thumb) may be needed. This heuristic combines content, motivation, as well as the reputation of the author of the information and confirmability of the information. Students should be introduced to this strategy and also have the opportunity to practice this skill frequently enough that they begin to use it instinctively. Ideally, this heuristic should be reinforced until it is second nature to students.

School Librarians: Leading the Way through Teacher Professional Development

Our research suggests that teacher professional development in media literacy should balance the needs of a structured curriculum alongside the changing dynamics of the social media world (Johnson 2018). Understanding that students may use a different set of critical-thinking skills when using social
Provide the following social media news heuristics checklist for teachers to use when teaching students to evaluate news obtained through social media.

a Content: What do I know about the topic in the news post? Have students jot down their prior knowledge of the news post’s content.

b Motivation: Do I need to do more in-depth research, or is the information in the news post sufficient? Have students articulate why they made the decision to research further or proceed with applying the heuristic.

c Reputation: What is the reputation of the person or organization that posted the news on social media? Have students articulate what they know about the person or organization.

d Confirmability: Can I find the same news elsewhere? Have students perform a simple search on [https://news.google.com](https://news.google.com).

e Evaluation: Have students determine whether or not the news seems credible based on the heuristic and articulate why.

Give teachers tips for implementing heuristics in the secondary curriculum.

a Provide practice examples of accurate and inaccurate news on social media. Then have students access their own social media feeds to evaluate the news posted using the heuristics checklist.

b Have students reflect on the process of using the heuristics checklist and articulate situations in which they may use heuristics versus a systematic process.

Students must practice working through the checklist often enough that they can do it fairly quickly and think of the activity as a heuristic or “rule of thumb.”

a Remember that, although students will learn this skill in school, they will use it on their own time when browsing social media. Instruction on systematic research processes should continue for use in the school setting.

b As new social media platforms gain popularity, students will inevitably switch, so this process should be adapted to whatever social media students are currently using.
One of the more complicated issues of social media use may be that the specific set of skills students need may change as quickly as teens’ preference for social media platforms. For example, Facebook may require a certain set of skills, but those skills may be slightly different for Instagram, Snapchat, or Twitter. Inevitably, teens will move to a social media platform that may present news in a different manner than did the previously preferred platform. For example, Facebook is no longer the dominant platform for teens, although adults indicate Facebook as their preferred platform, with two-thirds of American adults using Facebook regularly (Gramlich 2018). This means that not only can school librarians provide professional development for teachers about how to teach students heuristics for evaluating news obtained through social media, school librarians should also provide professional development that familiarizes teachers with the various social media platforms with which students engage.

Conclusion

One of the primary responsibilities of school librarians is to teach students to evaluate the credibility of information. As avenues for giving and getting information evolve, so must ways of teaching students so that they will be prepared for college, career, and life. In addition to teaching systematic approaches to information evaluation, we contend that heuristics can be an efficient means to teach middle and high school students how to evaluate news obtained through social media in real time. We live in a constantly connected world that is poised to become even more dependent on social media platforms for both information and communication. By incorporating heuristics into the school library and classroom, we are setting students up for success when they encounter news obtained through social media.
FEATURE

Media Literacy
A Moving Target

Hannah Byrd Little
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Students are looking more and more to social media for their daily news. In a 2015 Pew Research Center report on Millennials’ use of social media, researchers reported that “when it comes to where younger Americans get news about politics and government, social media look to be the local TV of the Millennial generation. About six-in-ten online Millennials (61%) report getting political news on Facebook in a given week, a much larger percentage than turn to any other news source…” (Mitchell, Gottfried, and Matsa 2015).

In 2018 our school library conducted a year-end survey covering use of information and technology (see figure 1). When asked where they hear or read about local and world news, the top three responses by our students were news websites (28.1 percent), television news (22.2 percent), and Snapchat Discover (17.6 percent). We had decided to add Snapchat Discover as an option because, according to 2017 app industry information about Snapchat, “U.S. penetration rate among 12–17 years old is 83%” (Dogtiev 2018) and because an environmental scan of our student body led us to the conclusion that use of the app was widespread among our students.

It is no longer reasonable to say, “Don’t get your news from Snapchat.” Instead, we must teach students to verify this news and know how to cite the information. In October 2017 we conducted a voluntary student workshop at our school titled “Snapchat Discovery: How to Impress Adults with Your Current Events Knowledge without Even Having to Leave Snapchat.” In the workshop we taught students how to read and subscribe to the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, the Washington Post, CNN, and the New York Times on Snapchat Discover. The workshop was well attended, and students had many questions about the resources in Snapchat Discover. But in November 2017, just one month later, Snapchat did an update that changed the way users viewed stories on Discover. This update required students to take an extra step if they wanted to read news. The Verge technology website reported, “Snap[chat] today introduced a redesign of its flagship app intended to promote more intimate sharing among friend groups while pushing professionally produced content into a separate feed” (Newton 2017).

When explaining the change, Snapchat published on their blog: “While blurring the lines between professional content creators and your friends has been an interesting Internet experiment, it has also produced some strange side-effects (like fake news) and made us feel like we have to perform for our friends rather than just express ourselves” (Snap 2017).

About as fast as Snapchat made the change they began plans to modify the update. Snapchat announced in May 2018 that the change would be modified in response to a user petition: “The company acknowledged that the ‘new Snapchat has felt uncomfortable for many,’ and now the company is yielding to some of those requests for change” (Ong 2018). As a result, Snapchat is now back on the table as an active and convenient news source for our students.

Because content from major media outlets is now available through social media websites such as Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, we must admit that these sources can be legitimate, and, of course, they are a popular source of news for our students. We must remember that ours is a tech-saturated world. In a recent Pew Research Center report Alex Halavais advises, “The primary change needs to come in education. From a very early age, people need to understand how to interact with networked, digital technologies. They need to learn how to use social media and learn how not to be used by it. They need to understand how to assemble reliable information and how to detect crap” (Anderson and Rainie 2018).

### Need for Media Literacy Mindset

In our year-end library survey almost 20 percent of students surveyed admitted that they rely on parents, friends, and word of mouth for local and world news. Nationally, we found in a Common Sense Media report that 33 percent of students often get news from teachers or other adults in their lives, 45 percent often get news from family, and 25 percent often get news from friends (Common Sense Media 2017). When we factor in our awareness of human nature and of implicit bias, we recognize that we must teach students about information and media bias—especially because many are getting their news secondhand.

Tools and examples we can use as educators abound. For example, in December 2016 a colleague pointed out a graphic depicting where news outlets fell in terms of political bias. On the chart, the prominent news outlets were placed as right-leaning, left-leaning, center/mainstream, or fringe. It took a while to determine the origin of the graphic. Within one day of the original post, it had already gone viral and was remade into a meme-style graphic through Imgur. It turns out, the graphic was developed by a patent attorney Vanessa Otero and was posted on her blog All Generalizations Are False. Otero offers a blank chart on the blog for use under a Creative Commons license, which requests attribution and should be acceptable for non-commercial use (Otero 2016).
It is no longer reasonable to say, “Don’t get your news from Snapchat.” Instead, we must teach students to verify this news and know how to cite the information.

“WHERE DO YOU HEAR OR READ ABOUT LOCAL AND WORLD NEWS?”

Figure 1. Results of 2018 Annual Library Survey from the Webb School Library.

When we factor in our awareness of human nature and of implicit bias, we recognize that we must teach students about information and media bias—especially because many are getting their news secondhand.
Another recent graphic categorizing news outlets in order of trustworthy to non-trustworthy was in a story about how to spot fake or biased news found in March 2017 on Snapchat Discover. The story was in a Snapchat-first Discover platform called Brother. The stated market for Brother is Millennial males. There were some marked differences between the chart by Vanessa Otero and the chart found on Brother. The first major difference was that one chart was somewhat complex and the other was very simple. The second difference was the way ranking was depicted. However, the biggest difference—recognized immediately—were in the rankings. In Otero’s chart, news outlets such as NPR were placed towards the bottom in red, which represented being less trustworthy (see figure 2).

Surprisingly, on the chart in the Snapchat Brother story about recognizing fake news, NPR was two outlets away from the Onion satire site. This chart was presenting one side of a poll that was completed by the Morning Consult. If you read the original Morning Consult article you will find that “fifty-one percent of people said they consider National Public Radio to be credible, but the outlet might be affected by a lack of awareness. Seventeen percent of people said they had never heard of NPR” (Nichols 2016). When we look at Brother’s parent company, though, we can form an opinion about the bias of the source. According to Kurt Wagner, writing for Recode (which may, of course, have its own bias), Brother is the product of “Vertical Networks, a U.K.-based media company run by Elisabeth Murdoch, the daughter of 21st Century Fox Chairman Rupert Murdoch” (Wagner 2016).

Media Literacy Teaching and Learning

Following the November 2016 presidential election, there was great concern in many quarters about fake news displaying on Facebook and popping up in Google searches. And then, in what seemed to be perfect timing, on November 22, 2016, a Stanford University team released the study Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning. The report conducted by Stanford History Education Group was an eighteen-month study that started well before the recent concerns about all the online fake news. The results of the study show that students all the way through college age are not employing the basics of evaluating a source (SHED 2016).

Librarians in schools should continue to teach students to evaluate all kinds of online material. The criteria that we have used for over a decade to evaluate websites can be used for all online sources, regardless of the format. Because our school ranges from sixth through
twelfth grades, teaching media literacy requires that we remember to teach on a continuum. In the early years, we keep it simple. The acronym BAT helps students remember to check bias, the author, and the timeframe. As students get older the concepts become more detailed. The acronym CRAAP and the CRAAP evaluation criteria developed at California State University-Chico help students check for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose. These concepts lead us into college-level reading and the more-complex topics from the Association of College and Research Library’s Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education; for instance, “Authority is constructed and contextual” (ACRL 2016, 4).

No matter what the formula, librarians must understand that teaching media literacy is not a static or one-time activity. The article “Flipside of Fake News: Appreciating Responsible Journalism” explores the ever-changing news literacy landscape (ProQuest 2017). Writing this feature for KQ spurred further research into the flipside of fake news: responsible journalism. Dr. Robert Byrd, a local professor in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media at the University of Memphis, was kind enough to respond to requests for an interview about the journalist’s perspective and the training of future journalists. Below are excerpts from the interview. The entire interview can be found on the Knowledge Quest blog. At the end of the interview, Dr. Byrd includes specific resources for K–12 librarians and teachers to teach students about news media (Byrd and Little 2018).

How to Spot Responsible Journalism: An Interview

HANNAH BYRD LITTLE: As a professor of journalism, what do you consider to be the hallmarks of responsible journalism and how can the reader spot these very specific things?

ROBERT BYRD: The first principle in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics is “seek truth and report it.” That’s what journalism is all about. Journalists abide by codes of ethics every day, but sometimes that means they may report on something that others may not want to hear. Sometimes the truth is ugly, or it puts someone on the hot seat. But we as journalists still have a public duty to publish that information.

Sometimes a reader’s issue with spotting high-quality news over the shoddy news is his or her own biases. News shouldn’t be disregarded just because we don’t want to believe it to be true. Readers should disregard news only after some fact checking of their own. The first thing anyone should do after reading, watching, or listening to a news story is Google. Can they confirm the story with at least two other sources? Are there other sources that refute the story?

So much of the fake news from the last couple of years was just outright fake—totally made up. Photos were ripped from other stories; information was fabricated; sources were created out of thin air. That’s completely different from real journalistic news. And so easy to spot.

For readers, they should be looking for actual news outlets. Do some research on the outlets that you’re using so that you know the vast majority of what they produce is accurate and balanced. Readers should also look at sourcing. Most journalists strive to include only verifiable information from credible sources. Information that can be confirmed by other sources. Most journalists rely on data produced by nonpartisan researchers. Journalists, according to the SPJ Code of Ethics, should be accountable and transparent, meaning we know their sources and they are standing by their work.

The problem with a lot of the fake news or fictional stories that are produced is that they were made to look like real news. Those stories weren’t produced by actual journalists. Those stories were and are produced by non-journalists with an agenda. There was a really good story in the New York Times about the guy who fabricated the story about Hillary Clinton stealing ballots and hiding them in a storage container in Chicago. It’s an interesting read—fascinating and scary (Shane 2017).

It all comes down to: If it sounds wrong, fact check it. If you don’t know the source, find other sources to refute or confirm. Even if it’s been shared 500,000 times on Facebook and your best friend posted it, investigate.

Intrigue without Compromising Accuracy

HBL: How do you teach journalism students to be intriguing at the same time differentiating themselves from online sources that are either extremely biased or are titillating click-bait?

RB: This is a great question, one that we often talk about in journalism classes. How to write a headline that grabs attention but isn’t sensational or misleading. Headline writing is an art. To be really good takes time and practice. Headlines are active, have keywords, tease the story without being sensational or salacious, give the reader an idea of the story before they click.
I don’t always think this is really the problem of journalists—they’re well-trained. This is the work of media corporations. The more sensational, the more clicks, the more advertising dollars. This also isn’t a new problem. Media history is filled with these kinds of sensational headlines that titillate readers but offer little in the way of public good.

I don’t know that we can change the corporate mentality. I think this is a reader education moment. If we can educate readers to avoid headlines like this, the clicks reduce and so do the profits from stories like this. Also, we have to train readers to read beyond the headline. There’s a ridiculous number of readers who only skim headlines for news and information—that’s scary given some of the headlines out there.

Tools for K–12 Teachers and Librarians

HBL: What tools can K–12 teachers and librarians use in their teaching to help students spot sloppy journalism and inaccurate news?

RB: Great question. I think media literacy should be a part of a K–12 curriculum. Students need to learn early on how media works—not just news, but advertising, public relations, and film and television as well. That curriculum could be taught in a dedicated class or as part of social studies or media studies, but it definitely should be included.

For librarians and teachers, there are some good resources out there to teach students about the media:

- The New York Times has a teaching and learning site that offers lesson plans on almost any subject, and their news and information topics are great (“Learning Network” 2018). One lesson explores the subject we’ve been talking about here—spotting fake news (Schulten and Brown 2017).
- NIE (Newspapers in Education) is a great resource as well. A few of the national newspapers have dedicated NIE sites that help students understand and dissect what it is they’re reading in the newspaper. The Washington Post has an NIE site that’s great (“Curriculum Guides” 2018).
- PBS offers lesson plans that coincide with PBS NewsHour. Great for students to watch the programming, and then learn more about the stories and the production. Also, great for teachers because the lesson plans are designed for varying grade levels. PBS also has a lesson plan about recognizing fake news (Pasquantonio 2016).

Finally, I would say for all K–12 teachers and librarians, it is important that they educate themselves on the media as well. It’s easy for all of us to fall prey to political rhetoric that demonizes the media, but our democracy is reliant on a strong, independent media. If we kill it because we’ve been duped into believing that it’s evil and fake, we’re most likely creating a society where the lines between fact and fiction are more and more distorted.

Hannah Byrd Little is the director of the library and archives at The Webb School. An AASL member, she is a Knowledge Quest blogger. She was a member of the AASL Libraries in Public Charter Schools Task Force from 2017 to 2018 and a member of the ALA Evidence-Based Library and Information Practice panel for the 2018 ALA Annual Conference. Hannah also served on the Tennessee Association of School Librarians (TASL) Executive Board from 2009 to 2013 and was TASL president in 2012.
Works Cited:


MUCH THERE!

Internet & Save Democracy

Angie Miller
angiemillerauthor@gmail.com
Luis was using his computer in the library to search for a current event. He needed to lead a Socratic Seminar in his English class, and wanted to make sure his topic was interesting and engaging. Landing on a U.S.-political-hoopla-piece-of-the-day, he read through it and muttered, “Yes, I think this looks interesting.” I glanced over his shoulder. “I think that would be a great topic!” I said to him. He looked up at me and with cynicism almost visibly dripping from his mouth said, “Now I just have to find an unbiased site. Because the BBC is crap. Fake news.”

The BBC is crap? Fake news?

Oh boy.

Friends, we have a problem here. We keep reminding our students to be skeptical of what they read so that they aren’t accepting falsehoods as truth (Marchi 2008). But what happens when our students have become so skeptical that they don’t trust real news sources? What happens when our students have become convinced that anything they read that disagrees with their own ideology should be distrusted? What happens when our students are so doubtful they can’t actually collect any information?

Our Ever-Changing Role

Librarianship is a continuously metamorphic journey that follows the evolution of media literacy, and we’ve been wrestling with the Internet for a few decades.

But now our students are living in an Internet world where politicians scream, “Fake news!” at reports they don’t like; foreign governments create actual fake news that bounces off the walls and gains momentum in our echo chambers; and journalism seamlessly blends the genres of reporting and commenting. If our students do not learn how to assess the information they access via the Internet for credibility, question an author’s motive, or synthesize new knowledge from what they read, we are at risk of breeding ignorance in an uninformed populace. Today’s political climate is an indictment of our nation’s online research skills. We have several generations who simply did not grow up with the Internet and have never received training or guidance, and another generation whose education systems have all too often assumed that they are “digital natives” and already know how to do all of this evaluation and critical thinking.

We are experiencing the new librarian shift. We are no longer providers and curators of information; we are guides for the mountains of information our students must trek through. We are the oxygen masks for every news excursion.

Start with Search Terms

Seventy-four percent of first-year college students report that they struggle with keywords and searches, and once they complete searches, nearly half of these students are overwhelmed by the amount of irrelevant information (Head 2013, 3). In fact, “I can’t find anything,” is a frequent comment I hear when students embark on their research, whether they are using the open Web, a subscription database, or an online book. I always ask, “What are you using for a search term?” and have discovered that our students type in the words that come first to their minds with no follow up, and use only the first few articles presented to them. When no helpful information is found on the initial try, students get frustrated and stop in their tracks.

Searching requires a certain savviness in language, and students who lack high-level vocabulary words struggle the most. But even those with limited vocabularies can be successful in research if we give them the right tools.

- In conversation, provide students with search terms using your own prior knowledge. “When you’re researching genocides, you should look up the Rohingya or the Armenians.” or “If you are studying disasters in the NASA program, start with the terms, ‘Space Shuttle Challenger’ and ‘Apollo 13.’” The goal is not to tell students what to do but to use our knowledge to guide them into building their own.

- Encourage the use of an online thesaurus.

- Model, using your own search terms, how different results come up when you change the search.

- Show students how reading Wikipedia can help them come up with search terms.

- Talk about selection of search terms regularly, so that students consider it as a normal part of the process that all learners have to grapple with. Ask them to reflect on what worked and what didn’t work. Make searching a metacognitive process.

Dig Wide—And Then Deep

It’s 2014. Michael Brown, an eighteen-year-old teenager from Ferguson, Missouri, has been shot and killed by a police officer, and racial tensions are high. On Facebook and Twitter, an image of a young black man, holding a gun to the camera and with a wad of cash in his mouth starts circulating. News
sources run the picture with titles like, "Ferguson’s Michael Brown Pictured with a Gun—Flashing Gang Signs." Friends of mine repost the picture on social media with comments having heavily racist overtones, while accusing mainstream media of suppressing photo coverage. Somehow some believe the young man’s death is justified because of this picture. These believers don’t know or ignore this fact: the picture isn’t of Michael Brown. It’s of another young man, Joda Cain, from Oregon, who was arrested for murder.

It is important to understand that research requires vertical and lateral thinking. While vertical thinking is often emphasized in school because it helps create deeper learning that establishes patterns, lateral thinking helps students restructure these patterns and broadens their learning (Hernandez and Varkey 2008, 27). In research, relying solely on vertical thinking can be dangerous as it reinforces information, regardless of whether or not it is true. If we teach students how to research laterally—meaning we don’t just dig deeper, we begin to move wider—we start using skills needed to validate information and challenge ideas. A vertical study could just help reinforce the falsehood of the Michael Brown claim, whereas a lateral study would turn up the discrepancies in information.

When students widen their searches and readings, they have a broader sense of the topic before they delve in deep to understand it thoroughly.

1) Have students read/view information and then ask How? Why? When?

2) Ask them to read/view another piece of information and then ask them if they get the same answers. Or if those answers are even there!

3) If a fact is claimed on the website, have students look to see if a source for the “fact” is cited and then go to that source. Has the fact been used in the correct original context?
4) If the information evokes a strong emotional reaction of anger or disbelief, have learners examine who the author is, what the website’s mission is, and if the same information in its entirety can be found on multiple sites.

5) Even if information can be found on multiple sites, ask students to uncover a differing perspective and draw conclusions after reading both viewpoints. Where did the differences lie? And can those differences become another search?

Imagine that research as digging for treasure. If we keep digging deeper, we might find treasure, but we also might dig to the center of the earth and find nothing. We may need to dig lots of smaller holes before we discover the one that’s worth digging deeper.

**Be Transparent**

Telling students to “research” or “assess resources” without modeling strategies is akin to telling students to speak French without ever hearing it or to play basketball without ever having watched a game. Such an instruction is called a “vague strategy statement” (Heath and Heath 2006); it is a strategy that banks on what we know how to do, not what our students actually know how to do. Too often, we think that students understand directions because in our minds these directions do make sense. But in fact, without explicit instruction, learners have to come to their own definitions of the terminology. When we offer abstract strategies to our students without modeling and teaching the tangible steps to meet those goals, learners adopt harmful practices.

### Table 1. Exemplars of high-quality research sites.

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<td>Grammy Museum</td>
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<td>CIA World Factbook</td>
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<td>History Channel</td>
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<td>TED-Ed</td>
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<td>Vi Hart</td>
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<td>Discovery Channel</td>
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<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>Constitute Project</td>
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<td>U.S. Department of State</td>
<td>Wall Street Journal</td>
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TELLING STUDENTS TO “RESEARCH” OR “ASSESS RESOURCES” WITHOUT MODELING STRATEGIES IS AKIN TO TELLING STUDENTS TO SPEAK FRENCH WITHOUT EVER HEARING IT OR TO PLAY BASKETBALL WITHOUT EVER HAVING WATCHED A GAME.

What this means is we need to routinely dump our thinking process out in front of students. Instead of telling students how to successfully dig around on the Web, we must show them what that process looks like. No orchestrated, preplanned routes are necessary. We can simply do live research in front of students, validating the confusing and messy process they will encounter.

1) Pull up a Google search on the overhead projector.

2) Find a resource that has interesting information.

3) Think out loud. Ask questions, change your search terms, move laterally through several links. Discuss credibility and doubts you might have. Don’t stress about looking like an expert. Instead, show the vulnerability of transparent thinking.

Explicitness and transparency in our practice will help avoid the ambiguity that can come from our assumptions about students’ skills and prior knowledge, and give students tangible ways to navigate the tricky course of online research.

Provide Them with Exemplary Sources

The Web is a labyrinth of resources that our students can get lost in, and a plethora of poor-quality sources are out there—sources toward which students seem to gravitate. I once taught several lessons on credible sources during a philosophy project, and then when I sat with a student who was studying Voltaire, he told me his best resource was <www.yolo-voltaire.weebly.com>. In another research project, I had a student tell me that he wasn’t able to find a single decent resource on the Bay of Pigs Invasion. I asked him if he had tried the Internet, and he replied, “Of course! That’s where I started!” Both times I wanted to lay my head on the table and resign right there.
Of course, both times it would have been easier to simply search for sites myself and deliver them to the students, but I also knew that doing so would not strengthen their skills. The challenge is always finding the balance between letting students seek out their own resources while not letting them get lost in a maze of poor choices.

Instead of worrying about providing them with specific articles to use, we can instead model what high-level academic research sites look like by providing them with exemplars and modeling use of these authoritative resources. With routine encouragement to delve into high-quality information, our students will begin to recognize which kinds of resources set the bar.

A chart like table 1 will help them maneuver their way through their labyrinths.

The Internet can be a curse and a blessing. It can be a rabbit hole of unforgiving falsehoods that systematically cement the worst of our notions, or it can be a gift of information and liberation. If we remove assumptions about digital nativism and guide our students through the literal web of information, we can help them succeed at conquering their worlds of knowledge.

Research will only ever be as good as the resources used. In a culture rife with rhetoric and disagreement, it is critical that we embed the lessons of seeking truthful and credible information into our daily practices. This is the skill that our students need to navigate messy political arenas, mixed media messages, and social media barrages. Every moment invested in teaching our students how to assess and dig into credible information is a moment invested in the future of a free press. Teaching students how to research using the Internet is no longer just a way to improve academics or to provide a life skill. It is an act of citizenship. It is essential to our democracy.

Angie Miller, author of It’s a Matter of Fact: Teaching Students Research Skills in Today’s Information-Packed World (Routledge 2018), is a high school librarian in Meredith, New Hampshire. She is a frequent contributor to Knowledge Quest and EdWeek and has had her work published in a variety of education books and websites, including the Washington Post’s Answer Sheet and Lindblad/National Geographic’s Expeditions. The 2011 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year, Angie served on her state librarian board as the Advocacy and Government Relations Chair for three years, and in 2017 the New Hampshire Library Media Association selected her program as School Library Program of the Year. She can be reached via her website <www.angiemillerauthor.com> and on Twitter @angieinlibrary.

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HOW WE OVERHAULED OUR WEBSITE EVALUATION LESSONS

“FAKE NEWS”

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FIGHTING "FAKE NEWS"
Fake news has evolved from a "self-explanatory-compound noun" (Merriam-Webster 2018) into a political buzzword used as a catchall to describe almost any information, depending on who is making the accusation about fake news. The fake news concept is not new, but the phrase has seen a lot of action since the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. Unfortunately, fake news is still a huge problem, and it’s not going away on its own (Wineberg and McKevers 2016). According to a report from Stanford University, approximately 80 percent of students participating in the study struggled to evaluate the credibility of an online resource (SHEG 2018). This finding is more than a little disheartening, since media literacy is a huge part of what we teach as school librarians, and it appears we have not been very effective.

Given the recent surge of fake news and the disappointing results of the Stanford study, we were inspired by the new AASL Standards Framework for Learners (2017) to overhaul our website evaluation lessons in our middle school library program. Concentrating on the Shared Foundations Inquire, Curate, and Engage—and their Key Commitments—we updated, created, and located new teaching resources, enabling us to build lessons about detecting fake news that were more comprehensive than lessons used in the past. The overhaul process continues to evolve, encouraging learners’ (and our own) sustained inquiry and critical thinking when analyzing information in the context of personal growth and research.

We began by updating our perspective on the phrase "fake news." Having seen the phrase co-opted to sell t-shirts (Trendy Tees 2018) and jeans (Logan 2018), “fake news” almost feels a little too hollow to use in lessons. Adding to that concern is the recent weaponizing of the phrase. Students can watch television or go online and see adults arguing, accusing different news outlets, reporters, and politicians of propagating fake news. We didn’t want our students to see us as just more adults jumping into the fake news fray.

According to the article “Teaching and Learning in a Post-Truth World” (Hobbs 2017), students need to understand the specific traits of deceptive information by learning about concepts like propaganda, click-bait, hoax, sponsored content, etc. Instead of teaching another lesson about fake news, we have opted to focus on specific elements most likely found within unreliable sources—that is, in fake news. Although we do not completely avoid saying “fake news” (it is, after all, a culturally relevant term), we do emphasize understanding where we get our information is bigger than simply learning about the phrase "fake news."

Transforming website evaluation lessons into media literacy lessons widened our scope to include content such as memes, online comments, links posted on social media, and native advertising, as well as traditional evaluation of websites. This expansion supports AASL Competency IV.B.1: “Learners gather information appropriate to the task by seeking a variety of sources" (2017). Because false information or fake news may be present in a variety of formats easily accessible by students who are more likely to use the Internet than any more-traditional source to get the majority of their information (Gasser et al. 2012), it is important to address standard IV.B.3, which calls for learners to question and assess the validity and accuracy of information as they collect information representing diverse perspectives, demonstrating competency IV.B.2 (AASL 2017).

The meme format continues to be popular for sharing information. Facebook’s struggle with fact checking and election interference shows how easily memes can spread propaganda (Brown 2018). Based on standard VI.A.3 (“Learners follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information by evaluating information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and appropriateness for need”), we showed students memes and asked them to find evidence supporting the meme’s message, refuting it, or a mix of both. We then switched roles, asking students to show us memes from their feed for us to evaluate for accuracy. Finally, we displayed our own memes created using a meme generator, showing how easy it is to create and spread content online.

This last step also fits with standards VI.B.1–3 and VI.C.1 that deal with ethical use of information and intellectual property (AASL 2017).

Another addition to our information evaluation program relies on resources accessible through the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), members of which researched students’ ability to evaluate online content. Unfortunately, the study shows major problems with how students assess information, noting learners’ devotion to graphs and statistics as indicators of facts or evidence and students’ inability to find and critically assess who or what is responsible for specific content online (McGrew et al. 2017). We started using worksheets from the Stanford study to assess our students’ online skills to see if there was an area that stood out as especially problematic. At <https://sheg.stanford.edu/civic-online-reasoning> SHEG currently offers a fairly comprehensive range of free online assessments we use as bell-ringers, activities within lessons, and jumping-off points for class discussions.
We have also begun experimenting with different website/information evaluation methods. No universal formula or checklist can replace the critical thinking needed to determine if information is credible, but checklists and formulas can be a starting point for many students. We gave students the Common Sense Media Website test as an example, and guidelines from NPR, the Meriam Library’s CRAAP test, and links to FactCheck.org stories (see list of resources), and then asked students to create their own checklists based on what they thought might work. Through this experiment students found that reading an About Me page can be pointless without further research and that verifying the credibility of a source can take longer than actually reading the information. In the article “The Challenge That’s Bigger Than Fake News” McGrew et al. suggest that relying on traditional checklists “underestimates just how sophisticated the web has become” (2017).

Not everyone feels comfortable with this, but we decided to gently explore and introduce some political content while teaching fake news (Rosenzweig 2017). This enables us to support standards II.C.1–2, which address informed conversation and recognizing multiple viewpoints on a topic by reinforcing a respectful learning culture and positive discourse while discussing real-world topics (AASL 2017). Some of the political ideas really hit home with students when they find out the truth is actually the opposite of information they have seen or heard—and may have previously believed.

As of this writing (early summer), our program is evolving again to incorporate games. We started with an online game, Factitious (Watson 2017), that showed us how much students are motivated by games and competition. Since students responded positively to the game, we’ve had classes create games for other classes using game show formats; now we’re working on a fake news BreakoutEDU game we plan to roll out this fall. Our goal is to keep our media literacy lessons fresh and relevant and to provide several options for delivery, such as discussion, analyzing Web content, and games. If we present our students with outdated examples, they are not going to believe we know what we are talking about, and they will stop listening to us.

School librarians should be almost the first line of defense against the spread of fake news, but regardless of how many innovative lessons we teach on defining and detecting
fake news, without critical thinking skills and the motivation to use the skills, students’ difficulties detecting fake news are likely to continue. Critical thinking is promoted throughout the AASL Standards. Certainly, I.D.3 (“Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by enacting new understanding through real-world connections”) and I.D.4 (“Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by using reflection to guide informed decisions”) (AASL 2017) are the motivation and critical thinking components present in almost everything we teach in the school library, including how to detect fake news.

Fake news has always been around, but now it feels more complex and threatening to society. Teaching how to navigate fake news not only supports research skills, critical thinking, and personal growth, it might also be a factor in the condition of our society as our students age into voting decision makers. Despite the fast pace of social media and online culture (Snapchat, Instagram, ubiquitous emojis), we can teach students to value their own opinions, and invest time and effort into forming them. Teaching media literacy is how we can fight fake news and how school librarians create lifelong learners.

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**Mica Johnson** is the school librarian at Farragut Middle School in Knoxville, Tennessee. An AASL member, she blogs for the Knowledge Quest website and serves as a member of the AASL Induction Program Committee. Mica is also a member of the Tennessee Association of School Librarians.

**Resources Mentioned:**

Annenberg Public Policy Center: FactCheck.org <www.factcheck.org>?

California State University, Chico, Meriam Library. “Evaluating Information — Applying the CRAAP Test” <www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf>?

Common Sense Education: “Identifying High-Quality Sites (6–8)” <www.commonsense.org/education/lesson/identifying-high-quality-sites-6-8>?

NPR: “Fake or Real? How to Self-Check the News and Get the Facts” <www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/12/05/503581220/fake-or-real-how-to-self-check-the-news-and-get-the-facts>
In preparation for this article, I Googled “define: media literacy” and got a ton of results. What I found troubling is that no library, librarian, or library-related organization was listed on the first page of the search results. We must do better. Not only must we continue to teach media literacy, we must also be on the forefront of defining what media literacy is and why it is important for our students and our communities. If school librarians are unwilling or unable to take on leadership in media literacy instruction, who will?

Okay, so for the definition, the Media Literacy Project (the first search result, and an organization that closed on June 30, 2015) defines media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media. Media literate youth and adults are better able to understand the complex messages we receive from television, radio, Internet, newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, video games, music, and all other forms of media” (Media Literacy Project n.d.).

Any of the actions in the definition above can be undertaken by students outside of the library and without the guidance of school librarians. Students have been accessing and creating media for years, often without our instruction or assistance. We add value to our students’ media literacy journey with our instruction and guidance in the areas of access, analysis, evaluation, and creation of media. We challenge our learners to go beyond Google in their search for information or to use Google more effectively by applying advanced search concepts, such as Boolean operators and filters, to their searches, or by limiting their image searches to those images that are labeled for noncommercial reuse. We ask our students to analyze the sources of information they use to ensure the source is appropriate for their needs. Most commonly, we guide our students toward academic databases and resources specifically curated for their use such as our print collection, specific websites, or other media. We push our students to evaluate the quality of the resources they find online, using frameworks such as CRAAP (CSU 2010) and others. More on those in a bit. Finally, we encourage our students to learn and use a wide variety of tools in creating and sharing their knowledge with a broader audience than just their teachers and classmates.

The competencies involved in information and media literacy are interwoven throughout the frameworks in AASL’s *National School Library Standards*. After carefully reading and rereading the AASL Standards, I am encouraged to see that the vast majority of these standards describe media-literacy-related activities that are already happening in many of the excellent school libraries across the United States. Below, I will share areas in which I found aspects of media literacy addressed in the AASL Standards.

**Include Shared Foundation**

In the Include Shared Foundation’s Think Domain, we ask our learners to contribute to a balanced perspective when participating in a learning community by adopting a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products. As school librarians, we help learners develop these competencies by providing a balanced collection of resources that reflect the diversity present in our student body and community at large. We empower our learners to become aware of and appreciate valuable con-

We **add value** to our students’ media literacy journey with our instruction and guidance in the areas of access, analysis, evaluation, and creation of media.
tributions from many cultures and viewpoints. We also challenge our learners to share their own insights and perspectives by our creating a safe, accepting space for everyone. We create such a space by providing access to and guidance in using our school library collection, which will provide information from different points of view and a variety of cultures. We also create opportunities for our learners to share their own insights and perspectives, both in writing and in opportunities for participating in civil discourse through activities such as debates, which can be held in the school library during the school day or after hours.

In the Create Domain we ask our learners to interact with others who reflect a range of perspectives, evaluate a variety of perspectives, and represent diverse perspectives during learning activities. The school library is the perfect place for these activities, precisely because it is a space for everyone—every grade level, every learning style, and every ability level. As school librarians we break down the walls of our classrooms and schools, connecting our students to learners around the world, helping our learners see themselves as not only a part of their local communities, but also as part of the world.

Within the Share Domain we ask our learners to engage in informed conversation and active debate and to contribute to discussions in which participants are encouraged to express multiple viewpoints on a topic. This engagement with others who may have different viewpoints fosters empathy and the ability to create media messages that appeal to a wide variety of people, not only to those within a specific echo chamber. The school library is a space for people with different viewpoints and opinions to come together and—with the professional guidance of the school librarian and possibly other educators in the building—respectfully share their perspectives.

Curate Shared Foundation

In the Curate Shared Foundation's Think Domain, we ask our learners to act on an information need by making critical choices about which information sources to use in their work. These critical-thinking skills set the stage for future success, as learners become adept at filtering out partisan noise and discovering useful information on which to base their choices. As school librarians, we help our learners develop these competencies by teaching them to dig deeper, going beyond the quick and easy answer, to access the best information available, not just the easiest information to locate. From my perspective, this is the heart of a school librarian’s work, guiding students beyond a simple search on a commercial search engine to critically examine information sources to determine where the best sources are located.

Within the Create Domain, we ask our learners to gather information appropriate to their task by collecting information representing diverse perspectives, while systematically questioning and assessing the validity and accuracy of information. As learners create new meaning from these diverse sources, they organize a variety of information sources that best meet their needs, while carefully considering the accuracy, reliability, and validity of each source. As school librarians, we model this behavior for our learning community through our curation efforts and through direct instruction in information and technology skills required to effectively curate the highest-quality resources. One way to provide this instruction is
by leading a class in playing and discussing a media literacy game such as the one at <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/5876044c-0392-4ab1-bf95-598686d53701>.

Within the Share Domain, we ask our learners to exchange information resources within and beyond their learning community by ethically using and reproducing others’ work to contribute to collaboratively constructed information resources. As school librarians, we work with learners to develop respect and appreciation for different perspectives, to access curated resources, such as databases that have been specifically created for their use, and to responsibly create learning products using a variety of formats. We facilitate learners’ development of these competencies by modeling the appropriate exchange of resources through our collection development policies and practices and by sharing carefully curated resources such as academic databases and subscription sites that have been selected and organized for specific purposes. AASL’s annual lists of best apps and websites for teaching and learning give us great places to start when teaching students to access curated resources and responsibly create learning products using the best tools available. (To see the 2018 and previous years’ lists, go to <https://standards.aasl.org/project/ba18> and <https://standards.aasl.org/project/bwt18>.)

Engage Shared Foundation

For me, the most relevant Shared Foundation for media literacy instruction is Engage. Within the Think Domain, we ask our learners to follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information by responsibly applying information technology, and media to learning; understanding the ethical use of information, technology, and media; and evaluating information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and its appropriateness for their needs. We help learners accomplish all this by following professional standards in our practice; teaching learners how and why we evaluate information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context; and assessing the information’s appropriateness for a given need. We also educate our entire school community on information ethics and intellectual property. One example of teaching adults about the ethical use of information is our annual reminder of copyright law, the four factors of fair use, and how they apply to our copying and remixing educational materials for our students.

Within the Create Domain, we ask our learners to ethically use and reproduce others’ work, acknowledge authorship, and demonstrate respect for the intellectual property of others. We also want learners to include elements in their own personal knowledge products that enable others to credit content appropriately. An example of such an element is Creative Commons licensing. We foster learners’ development of these competencies by sharing a variety of strategies to ethically use and reproduce others’ work and by modeling this ethical use in our instruction. We also work with teachers to require complete attribution to acknowledge authorship and demonstrate respect for the intellectual property of others when working on class assignments. Our school libraries are environments in which all members of the school community can work together to engage in activities that feature the acceptable and ethical use of information, technology, and media.

Within the Share Domain, we ask learners to share information resources in accordance with modification, reuse, and remix policies. We help students develop these competencies by teaching our students strategies for sharing information in accordance with these policies, and by providing online and physical spaces for the dissemination of ideas and information. Any lessons we teach about citing sources using standard formats such as MLA or APA, as well as lessons in Creative Commons licensing, fall into this category.

As we and our learners develop competencies in the Grow Domain, we model the safe, responsible, ethical, and legal use of information and ask our learners to reflect on the process of ethically generating knowledge and to inspire others to engage in appropriate information behaviors. In addition to modeling and directly teaching ethical use of information and media, as school librarians we can be the champion for safe,
When we ask learners...to reflect on their use of information and whether or not that use was ethical, safe, responsible, and legal, we are continuing this great tradition of commitment to professional librarians’ responsibilities and respect for intellectual property.

Building On and Expanding Traditional Library Lessons

So, our new National School Library Standards create a framework to support our continuing efforts to teach media literacy and information literacy, both to our students and to the adults in our school as needed. The good news is we have been doing this for a very long time, and I would argue that we have been doing this very effectively, both in our independent library instruction, which typically happens at the elementary level, and in our collaborative library instruction, which most commonly occurs in the secondary level in collaboration with classroom teachers. There are many examples of existing “library lessons” that address portions of the standards. One example briefly mentioned above are the lessons that school librarians have been giving for decades on citing sources—but updated, of course, for the 21st-century array of resources available to our learners. Another example is when we ask learners to evaluate a variety of perspectives, but we first teach them what a critical evaluation looks like. Many librarians use information evaluation rubrics and frameworks such as RADCAB (Christensson 2006), CRAAP (CSU 2010), RADAR (Mandalios 2013), or others useful for evaluating information sources.

There has been some pushback recently from some who believe that teaching information literacy using one of the frameworks above (incorrectly characterized as a checklist) sets up our students for failure by simplifying the questions that students should ask when evaluating information sources (Breakstone et al. 2018). While these are indeed simple frameworks, I believe they are still an excellent way to introduce students to the idea of teasing apart a media message and looking at its component parts to determine its usefulness for their information needs.

Other skills, such as lateral reading, are extremely useful in applying these frameworks. For example, when assessing an author’s reliability under the CRAAP framework, lateral reading comes into play when we teach our students to open a new tab in the browser and Google the author’s name along with other keywords such as “criticism” or “reputation.” In this way, we combine the fundamental skill of lateral reading with elements of our well-established information literacy frameworks to produce students who not only critically analyze information, but also potentially become fact-checkers for themselves and others in their communities.
Looking Around and Looking Ahead

If you don’t currently teach these aspects of media literacy in your school library or in collaboration with teachers in their classrooms, I strongly recommend getting started right away. First, familiarize yourself with our National School Library Standards. They create a strong foundation for media literacy instruction, as described above. I would then recommend familiarizing yourself with some of the issues in media literacy. A great place to start is Jay Smooth’s Crash Course Media Literacy series on YouTube (preview at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPwJ0obJya0&list=PL8dPuuajtM6jSpzb5gMNsx9kdmqBfmY>). These videos are well made and cover many aspects of media literacy in a style that our students will find engaging and thought provoking.

I try to embed all of the activities that I do with teachers, students, and the community at large within the framework of school library advocacy. I approach every interaction, teaching opportunity, or chance to communicate with others who may not be familiar with the work that school librarians do as an opportunity to share not only what we do, but why it matters to our students, teachers, communities, and, in the case of information and media literacy, the future of our democracy. This is serious work—work that must be shared with others outside of our profession so that they can see school librarians as media literacy leaders who make our communities, our nation, and our world a better place.

Len Bryan is the library technology systems manager for Denver Public Schools. Previously, he served the children of Texas for ten years in the classroom, teaching middle school and high school English. He earned his MSLIS from the University of North Texas in 2009 and served as a middle school librarian. He then took on the opportunity to open a new high school, where he served as librarian, webmaster, and National Honor Society advisor, among other roles. He later served as the school program coordinator at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and the district librarian for Hillsboro School District. He is a member of AASL and serves on the AASL Standards Implementation Committee and is chair of the AASL Social Media Committee.

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MAKERSPACES
FOR ALL:
SERVING LGBTQ
MAKERS IN
SCHOOL LIBRARIES
Introduction

Nearly 1.3 million youth, approximately 8 percent of high school students in the United States, identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Schlanger 2017). About one hundred and fifty thousand, or 0.7 percent, identify as transgender (Herman et al. 2017). Bharat Mehra and Donna Braquet (2011) estimate there are 2.5 million LGBT teenagers in the United States, spanning middle and high school as well as early college age. These statistics give us in school libraries a very clear picture. LGBTQ students are in our schools, classrooms, and libraries, whether or not we know of their sexual and gender orientations. If by some chance we don’t have LGBTQ students, we can be confident that our students know or are related to someone who identifies as LGBTQ (Oltmann 2016).

Laura Fleming has defined a makerspace as “a metaphor for a unique learning environment that encourages tinkering, play, and open-ended exploration for all” (2016). This definition does not specify a type of technology to be used within makerspaces, nor does it identify a group or population that should use them. Makerspaces exist for tinkering, play, and exploration among all students. These learning spaces can also be locations for problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Makerspaces have the potential to be safe spaces for LGBTQ youth. Youth may be empowered within makerspaces to create products that establish and communicate their LGBTQ identities. Makerspaces also have the potential to give LGBTQ youth the confidence to defy stereotypes based on sexual orientation and gender to create in spaces that may not be traditionally designed with them in mind (Meyer 2018). If you have a makerspace in your school library, you already have a location that is inviting to your student population and potentially emancipatory for LGBTQ youth.

As we write this article, we hope to encourage further thought and consideration of how to take advantage of your makerspace to empower LGBTQ students.

LGBTQ Students and Libraries

Before discussing makerspaces specifically, it is important to understand how LGBTQ youth perceive the libraries that host these spaces. This understanding can give an idea of how to leverage makerspaces as a way to make LGBTQ youth feel included within the larger school library context. Within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), a lack of empirical research exists on LGBTQ youth (Robinson 2016). Several factors contribute to this lack of research,
including the difficulty of obtaining informed consent to participate in research studies. Participants under the age of eighteen may want to participate in a study but not make their parents or guardians aware of their LGBTQ identities (Mustanski 2011). For this reason and others, LIS work about LGBTQ youth is primarily anecdotal (Robinson 2016).

What we do know from LIS research on LGBTQ adult populations is that they perceive the library as an important yet disappointing resource for identity-related information (Hamer 2003). Libraries often mirror broader society and culture, wherein LGBTQ identities are not the norm. Practices like cataloging reflect this mirroring, where subject headings lack terms that convey the fluidity and multiplicity of LGBTQ identities, as well as adequate cross-referencing (Rothbauer 2004).

While LGBTQ individuals do not see themselves reflected in libraries, they do seek alternate sources of identity-related information. Similar to LIS studies of other marginalized groups, research demonstrates that LGBTQ individuals value information provided by other LGBTQ people who share their experiences (Fox and Ralston 2016). The Web can serve as an essential resource for this information since online environments encourage people to create and share information, not only consume it. For LGBTQ individuals, this participatory culture can lead to opportunities for informal teaching, as individuals with experiential knowledge can write blogs, create videos, and answer questions within Q&A forums (Fox and Ralston 2016).

Research findings illustrate two key points. First, LGBTQ individuals do not necessarily view a library as a trustworthy information source for identity-related information. Second, LGBTQ individuals are actively creating information that can be affirmative and relevant for others. Makerspaces are a location for school librarians to encourage LGBTQ individuals to create and share information with their peers, leading to several beneficial outcomes; among them are increased visibility and inclusivity of LGBTQ students within schools. In addition, LGBTQ youth may begin to exercise more trust in libraries that host inclusive makerspaces. Making makerspaces inclusive of LGBTQ identities starts with ensuring that they are safe spaces for all students. Inclusivity within a maker learning location in the library creates a safe environment within and for our school community and establishes students’ trust in the library.

Makerspaces = Safe Spaces

A safe space can be described as a location (digital or in person) where groups can escape societal and mainstream stereotypes and marginalization (Geek Feminism Wiki n.d.). Creating a safe space can be challenging because it can be difficult to balance the priorities of various student groups. However, the idea of cultivating a safe space is that if the most-marginalized groups of students can feel included, it benefits all students. The idea is a safe space for all. When thinking about your school library or makerspace as a safe space, think about the following:

1. If you have rules in your library, do these rules include respect for all visitors and makers?
2. As a librarian do you intervene when there is bullying either in person or online?
3. Do you have LGBTQ materials (books, periodicals, etc.) in your library and makerspace?
4. Is diversity exhibited across your library in displays and on posters and bulletin boards?
5. Do you celebrate and support LGBTQ events in your community?
6. Are your library and makerspace safe and accessible for all patrons?
7. Do you provide meeting space or host activities for LGBTQ student groups and maker events? (GLSEN n.d.)

The members of your library community are the heart of the makerspace. Making gives students opportunities to tinker, hack, make, problem solve, and collaborate. Makerspaces in library locations can provide anyone the opportunity to explore and create new possibilities for the future (Britton 2012). Ideally, makerspaces are safe places for all students to explore and enjoy the idea of creating and making. In the
following section we discuss practical ideas for fostering such inclusivity in your school library makerspace.

**Ideas for School Librarians**

Beyond making sure your library is a safe space for LGBTQ students, what are some ways that you can encourage their creating and making? Here, we offer recommendations organized by three themes informed by prior empirical research (Kitzie 2017).

The first recommendation is to position LGBTQ students as experts. Rather than assume what makerspace events and activities are relevant to your LGBTQ students, ask them to identify their making needs. Your role should be to give them the resources to meet these needs. These needs might reflect the everyday practicalities and barriers to living an LGBTQ life, such as the need for a sewing class that would appeal to transgender, genderqueer, and other gender creative students who may wish to alter their wardrobes. These needs could also integrate with school-wide activities, such as designing affirmative posters and signs for Pride month in June.

The second recommendation is to recognize the rich variety of LGBTQ experiences that exist. These identities are not monolithic. Not only can other, intersecting identity categories shape a student’s experience, but also students have individual agency over their own lives. For instance, while some students might want to engage in makerspace activities that are visibly LGBTQ, other students may not feel comfortable participating in these events. Therefore, it is essential to make all makerspace activities inclusive, not just those that are LGBTQ. For instance, you can incorporate LGBTQ voices from outside the school into your making activities, such as assigning a reading list about a making activity and including on the list works by LGBTQ people who are experts in the field. Or you might, when sponsoring coding activities in your makerspace, assign a reading list that includes works by LGBTQ programmers.

Finally, appreciate the informativeness of the products your LGBTQ students create. Information is not just found in books and other formal sources. Information LGBTQ students—and other students—consider valuable may very well come from themselves and other learners. As a result, what LGBTQ students make in your schools has value after the making process. Your school library may wish to consider working with willing and eager students to share and disseminate their content, for example by recording oral histories and allowing others to listen to them in the library. Another idea is to have an LGBTQ creator in residence, who can suggest ideas for making and have their creations displayed and archived by the school library.

Based on these three themes, here are some further recommendations to encourage LGBTQ making within your makerspace:

- Run your makerspace horizontally, rather than as a hierarchy. Let students contribute their ideas for making activities and run various making sessions.
- Come up with a code of conduct for your makerspace generated by the students. Identify barriers to participation (e.g., language, dress) and have students identify in the code of conduct how these barriers can be addressed.
- Question what making activities you might inherently privilege, such as programming activities over crafting ones. How might privileging certain activities over others influence who feels comfortable doing the making?
- Recognize that different types of making might be considered gendered (e.g., sewing is for girls; engineering is for boys). Encourage all students to see how any of these activities can be valuable, technical, and precise. Create spaces for students to engage in activities they may have been discouraged from pursuing because the activities were perceived as too feminine or too masculine.
• Embrace failure. Often what we consider to be a “failure” within a makerspace can question the underlying assumptions we have about makerspaces that may be keeping certain groups, including LGBTQ ones, out.

Final Thoughts

Makerspaces are relevant to all students and, therefore, should be inclusive for all students. If you have implemented a maker learning space in your library, you are well on your way to offering a safe spot for ideas, creation, and collaboration for all. This article is offered in the spirit of encouragement to think about all students, their identities, and how they can best be served throughout your library and maker location.

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Works Cited:


Vanessa Kitzie is an assistant professor at the University of South Carolina in the School of Library and Information Science. Her research examines how people create, seek, and make sense of information within their everyday lives. She currently serves as the chair of the Advocacy Committee for ALA’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table. You can follow Vanessa on Twitter @vkitzie.
READING CHAMPIONS

A Leadership Opportunity for School Librarians
School librarians who serve as literacy leaders in their schools build library-classroom connections by collecting and curating diverse resources. They engage in reading promotion, coteach reading comprehension strategies along with information literacy skills, and integrate technology tools into students’ independent and curriculum-focused reading. School librarians also provide formal and informal professional development for colleagues in each of these areas as they serve as reading champions in their schools.

Collection Development and Reading Promotion

Competent reading promotion is generated in the context of a diverse and inclusive school library collection. School librarians have the responsibility for purchasing, gathering, and curating a rich array of resources in which students see their own culture reflected and learn about cultures and perspectives that are not their own. Integrating global literature, which includes both multicultural and international books, into the curriculum helps

Whether the text is printed on paper or presented digitally, today’s students are required to make sense from what they read. A text is the totality of the work that weaves together print and illustration, whether in paper or in electronic format. With digital resources, text may also include audio, video, or other information in addition to print. “From reading promotion to aligning reading and writing with inquiry learning, school librarians’ ever-expanding roles as literacy leaders have grown alongside the explosion of information and the development of the technology tools used to access it” (Moreillon 2017, 88).

White Oak (TX) Middle School students enjoy reading self-selected titles during the library’s book club meeting.
educators develop their own cultural competence as it helps prepare students for living and working in a global society.

School library collections also include resources in multiple genres, at a wide range of reading proficiency levels, and in multiple formats to support success for all students. School librarians promote global literature and multimodal texts through reader’s advisory, book clubs, and literacy initiatives, including voting for statewide book awards. From book fairs and author-illustrator visits to poetry slams and family literacy nights, school librarians ensure that their literature promotions are effective; they work in collaboration with students, classroom teachers, specialists, administrators, and families. To lead, school librarians involve the entire school community in establishing and sustaining a culture of reading.

Effective school librarians collect resources based on classroom teachers’ and students’ requests as well as on published book reviews. When the school library receives new curriculum-aligned materials, school librarians discuss integrating these resources with classroom teachers whose curriculum they support. Librarians work with their colleagues to codevelop text sets focused on standards-based topics and curriculum themes. In the process, school librarians and educators further their own cultural competence as they evaluate and identify resources. Together, they codevelop print and digital pathfinders that go beyond a list of titles or Web links to include annotations and additional information to support students’ information-seeking activities. Along the way, these collaborative activities offer colleagues informal, job-embedded professional development. This ensures the effective integration of children’s and young adult literature representing divergent perspectives, in all genres, at various reading proficiency levels, and in multiple formats.

In statewide school library impact studies, “the most substantial and consistent finding is a positive relationship between full-time, qualified school librarians and scores on standards-based language arts, reading, and writing tests, regardless of student demographics and school characteristics” (Lance and Kachel 2018). These correlational studies provide evidence on which school librarians build robust library collections and high-impact reading promotion activities. In additional studies cited by Melissa P. Johnston and Lucy Santos Green (2018), it was the school librarians’ collaboration with classroom teachers that made the difference in improved student learning.

**Coteaching Information Literacy Skills and Reading Comprehension Strategies**

As the AASL document “Position Statement on School Librarian’s Role in Reading” proclaims: “School librarians are in a critical and unique position to partner with other educators to elevate the reading development of our nation’s youth” (AASL 2009). Collaboration is a way of working in which team members work together as equal partners to achieve a particular outcome or goal. “Collaboration” involves “working with a member of the teaching team to plan, implement, and evaluate a specialized instructional plan” (AASL 2016). Collaboration requires effective ongoing communication, joint planning, and...
individual and collective action, and commitment to a shared outcome. Coteachers learn with and from one another and further develop their craft as they coplan, coinplement, and co-assess literacy-rich lessons and units of instruction. Coteaching reading comprehension provides job-embedded professional development for classroom teachers and school librarians.

Using the rich array of library resources is an ideal context for strengthening students’ reading. To make sense of texts, proficient readers automatically use comprehension strategies, such as activating background knowledge, making predictions, and drawing inferences. Striving and struggling readers need more opportunities to practice comprehension strategies when they interact with texts above their proficient reading level. During inquiry learning, students invariably wrestle with texts above their proficient reading levels. All readers need a complete toolkit of reading comprehension strategies to help them make sense of unfamiliar or challenging text. School librarians who integrate the resources of the library into the classroom curriculum and coteach reading comprehension strategies can document their contributions to classroom teachers’ and students’ success.

The study of online reading comprehension is a relatively new area of research. The following description of online reading strategies likely sounds very much like what we librarians think of as information literacy skills. Online reading comprehension “consists of a process of problem-based inquiry across many different online information sources, requiring several recursive reading practices: (a) reading online to identify important questions; (b) reading online to locate information.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS</th>
<th>READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming and webbing</td>
<td>Activating background knowledge</td>
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<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keyword searching</td>
<td>Determining main ideas (or determining importance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skimming and scanning</td>
<td>Building background knowledge Making predictions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determining information gaps</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making notes</td>
<td>Determining main ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzing text for perspec- tive or bias</td>
<td>Drawing inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing evidence</td>
<td>Determining main ideas Drawing inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>Determining main ideas Drawing inferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synthesizing from multiple sources</td>
<td>Synthesizing</td>
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Table 1. Intersection of information literacy skills and reading comprehension strategies. Source: Adapted from Figure 3.4: Inquiry Learning Subskills in Maximizing School Librarian Leadership: Building Connections for Learning and Advocacy (Moreillon 2018, 48).
By thinking aloud, educators demonstrate how to skim and scan, sift and sort, think, draw inferences, make notes, cite evidence, and record resources so that these processes are visible to students.

Processes for Coteaching Comprehension and Information Literacy

Collaborating educators can develop processes for helping students engage with difficult texts. The following self-questioning protocol can be used when students are learning in the library or a classroom. The consistent application of such a set of questions gives students a strong foundation on which to build text comprehension.

1. What is my purpose for reading this text?
2. How does this text relate to my inquiry question(s)?
3. Will the genre of this text help me access the information I want to find?
4. What specific information am I searching for?
5. What do I want to learn from this text? (Moreillon 2018, 64).

After this initial questioning process, students will ask additional questions related to analyzing the text for currency, accuracy, authority, and perspective or bias. School librarians consider these questions critical information literacy skills. These are also essential text comprehension questions. When educators model how to ask text analysis questions, they demonstrate the importance of determining perspective or citing evidence of bias. When modeling questioning strategies, educators also use discipline-specific vocabulary and questions to reinforce students' content knowledge. The process of asking questions while engaging with information helps readers monitor text comprehension as well as inquiry learning.

When educators coteach using think-alouds, they share critical thinking about a text. Two or more educators can share with students that the educators themselves bring different background knowledge to the reading of the same text. They can share how pursuing different lines of questioning can make some information more or less important to the reader. By thinking aloud, educators demonstrate how to:

- skim and scan
- sift and sort
- think, draw inferences, make notes, cite evidence, and record resources so that these processes are visible to students.

"Comprehension instruction is most effective when students integrate and flexibly use reading and thinking strategies across a wide variety of texts and in the context of a challenging, engaging curriculum" (Harvey and Goudvis 2013, 434). When educators coteach reading comprehension and information literacy skills, students learn to apply strategies in an authentic context: inquiry learning. Educators experience reciprocal mentorship as they develop shared vocabulary, processes, and practices that support student learning, whether that learning is taking place in classrooms or the school library.
skim and scan, sift and sort, think, draw inferences, make notes, cite evidence, and record resources so that these processes are visible to students. Then, when students are independently reading for information, two or more coteaching educators are available to monitor students’ application of comprehension and thinking strategies. When students are learning, practicing, and applying these strategies in their classrooms and in the library, they have increased opportunities to develop as proficient readers and inquirers.

Reading and Technology Tools

School librarians are tasked with integrating e-books, audiobooks, and other electronic resources into students’ independent reading and curriculum-based learning. School librarians can help students learn to use e-books effectively through bookmarking, notemaking, and other affordances of digital devices and apps. While some elementary-age students voice a concern about their ability to attend to text and comprehend while reading electronically, others have found that reading electronically jump-started their pleasure reading both at school and at home (McVicker 2017, 6). Research also shows that audiobooks or audiobooks in combination with printed books may benefit adolescents as a leisure activity or may help those who struggle to decode texts because listening allows them to interact with others around texts (Moore and Cahill 2016, 9–10). Learning to make meaning from online texts such as video tutorials, podcasts, software help files, and more are essential tasks for future-ready students.

As noted above, reading digital resources involves the reading strategies used for printed texts as well as information search skills and literacy skills. Electronic resources have advantages that can support or challenge readers. Some of the affordances of printed books such as tables of contents, indexes, and glossaries are not uniformly available in digital resources. Students will need to develop their ability to conduct advanced searches and use search strategies for the purpose of locating specific information within a resource or a specific text. Quick access to online dictionaries and hyperlinks to additional information can make information more accessible to some students. Other readers may find these tools difficult to use or distracting.

Since reading is a complex activity, school librarians must remain mindful that one size will not fit all. Advocating for students’ use of both traditional texts and digital texts can be an important role for school librarians during coplanning with classroom teachers. Spotlighting all types of texts in reading promotion and literacy events can broaden the concept of “legitimate” texts for some students, educators, and parents. Integrating multimodal texts into the classroom curriculum can be a win for students who are motivated to engage with these texts or learn best with them. When school librarians collaborate with classroom teachers and specialists, they can ensure that each reader has opportunities and the necessary skills to access and make sense of texts in all formats.

School librarians can be leaders in developing their colleagues’ expertise in using digital resources and tools. Through coplanning and coteaching, librarians offer personalized professional development for classroom teachers and specialists. When organizing formal professional development for faculty, librarians position their work at the forefront of enacting digital learning in their schools. School librarians can be leaders who help diffuse the effective use of digital resources and tools throughout the learning community.

Literacy Leadership and Advocacy

Leadership and advocacy are about influencing the attitudes and behaviors of others. With their global view of the learning community and the library at the hub of independent and curriculum-based reading, school librarians have a golden opportunity to advocate for the profession’s common beliefs about reading and learning. In addition to reading as a core competency, school librarians believe that “intellectual freedom is every learner’s right” and that “information technologies must be appropriately integrated and equitably available” (AASL 2018, 11). As reading champions, school librarians have the responsibility as well as the opportunity to ensure choice, voice, inclusion, and equity in students’ school-based literacy learning experiences.

At its heart, literacy leadership is about social justice. Without the ability to read proficiently and critically, students will be unable to develop a love of reading or become discerning consumers of information—skills they need to be lifelong learners and informed global citizens. School librarians know that students who are unable to make meaning from text cannot be information literate. They also know that to be critical users and creators

Since reading is a complex activity, school librarians must remain mindful that one size will not fit all.
of ideas and information students must be able to deeply interrogate the texts they read. With a focus on reading across the curriculum and all educators serving as reading teachers in their disciplines, school librarians must take on the responsibilities of reading champions. They must teach alongside discipline-focused educators who may not be versed in teaching reading comprehension or information literacy skills.

Without sophisticated literacy skills, youth cannot achieve their full potential in their personal, professional, or civic lives. Young people who lack literacy skills will struggle in their schooling and the workforce. They will lack the discernment needed to effectively engage in political life. Perhaps now more than ever, today’s readers must be able to read both “the word and the world” (Freire and Macedo 1987). Applying critical thinking while reading is the key to deeply comprehending meaning in texts and to using information to take action in the world. Reading also sparks curiosity, creativity, and the imagination in ways that lead to innovations that can solve the world’s most pressing problems.

Alongside colleagues, school librarians help shape a literacy-empowered future for students. School librarians are wise to reflect on what it takes to be a reading champion in today’s literacy landscape. They are wiser still to self-assess their practice and step up their literacy leadership. The time is right and ripe for school librarians to position their work to meet the ongoing challenge of helping students achieve the critical competencies they need to be successful in school and beyond. Partnering with principals and parents and collaborating with classroom teachers and specialists to elevate students’ reading comprehension and information literacy skills are pathways to leadership for school librarian reading champions.

At its heart, literacy leadership is about social justice.
# Reading Champions: Think, Create, Share, and Grow Self-Assessment

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<tr>
<th><strong>THINK</strong></th>
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It’s a story that can be seen as great entertainment or as a great breach of trust committed by the free press.

Fake News: Teaching Skeptics, Not Cynics

Darcy Pattison

In 2010 I went to Nantucket Island planning to write about Tony Sarg, the puppeteer who designed the first Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons as upside-down marionettes, and who was a long-time resident of Nantucket. Instead of preparing to write a biography, my research focused on a publicity stunt that Tony Sarg pulled in 1937. In the last few years, as the term “fake news” has become common, I realized it was time for *The Nantucket Sea Monster: A Fake News Story*.

In August 1937 the Nantucket newspaper the *Inquirer and Mirror* reported eyewitness sightings of sea monsters off Nantucket Island. The truth? Tony Sarg had floated one of his huge balloons, a 135-foot sea monster that would fly in the 1937 parade, onto a Nantucket beach. It’s a story that can be seen as great entertainment or as a great breach of trust committed by the free press.

As part of the research, I studied the newspaper accounts of the story. Fortunately, the *Inquirer and Mirror* archive is available online as a searchable database at [http://bit.ly/Nantucket-Newspaper](http://bit.ly/Nantucket-Newspaper). In addition to searching for articles on the story itself, I searched the archives for other mentions of each person involved in the hoax.

The March 13, 1937, issue reported the formation of the Nantucket Publicity Committee. The Publicity Committee was tasked with creating a town booklet and advertising the booklet across the nation, including a small ad in *National Geographic*—an ad that produced thirty requests per day. While the committee’s official duties related to tourism, most men on the committee were also involved in the sea monster hoax, a circumstance that put a different spin on the story. When I uncovered this contextual information, I realized students needed to understand the timeline, which is included in my book’s back matter.

More Than Just a Hoax

The sea monster publicity stunt was more than just a hoax because of the cooperation of news media. Off-island newspapers, newsreel organizations, and the editor of the *Inquirer and Mirror* all cooperated in deliberately spreading the fake news about the event. In August 1937 the *Inquirer and Mirror* reported: "In the last analysis, through press, radio and newsreels, ‘Nantucket’ will be placed before 100,000,000 people" ("About the Sea Monster" 1937). They felt that no one was harmed, and Nantucket had received a great boon of publicity and economic benefit. Besides it was great entertainment.
An Old, Old Story

Is fake news just a problem of our times? No, it happened in 1937, and even going back to the time of Thomas Jefferson, who penned these conflicting quotes:

“Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe.” (Jefferson to Yancey 1816)

“Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper.” (Jefferson to Norvell 1807)

The problem of fake news is inherent in the issues surrounding the First Amendment right to a free press. If the press is free, it can investigate and report on governmental and other wrongdoings. However, it can also print whatever it likes, true or not.

I think it’s crucial to help kids understand the necessity of the flip side of the free press. In a democracy, a free press keeps politicians honest (or at least more honest), and yet that protection from corruption comes at the price of a different kind of corruption. Therefore, students must learn to evaluate media reports and form an opinion about information’s validity and sources’ possible biases.

Media Literacy Education

To understand how this story can be presented to kids, it’s helpful to look at the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (MLE), available at <https://namle.net/publications/core-principles>. While the core principles discuss the value of media literacy education, I find it more interesting to look at the MLE Implications for Practice that focus on students and the skills they need. The principles and their implications remind us that a story such as The Nantucket Sea Monster is not about teaching students what to think, rather it’s about ‘teaching how to arrive at informed choices that are consistent with their own values’ (NAMLE 2007, 5).

How do students initially react to the story of The Nantucket Sea Monster? For some students, it’s just a fun story. In other words, it’s an introduction to the issues of free press, but they don’t yet have enough sophistication to understand it. That’s fine because we often introduce topics knowing that students’ understanding will develop as they mature.

Some students are outraged. They want to go into Sherlock Holmes mode and make statements such as, “They should have known it was a fake footprint because they would’ve seen shovel marks in the sand.” These
students are just starting to wrestle with ideas of truth and falsehood; in other words, they are on their way to learning to evaluate evidence, a valuable skill.

Other kids fail to understand the depth of the lies involved in such a hoax. For example, the story quoted eyewitnesses who said that the sea monster’s head floated fifteen feet above the water. The student might ask, “How’d they get that balloon to float fifteen feet above the water?”

This student fails to understand the mechanisms of the hoax. Of course, there were no eyewitnesses and, therefore, no eyewitness reports. For these students, it’s almost a loss of innocence, which is a delicate teaching moment.

Here’s the NAMLE Core Principle Implication for Practice 4.2. “MLE is designed to create citizens who are skeptical, not cynical.”

Our goal is to help students understand the events, to question evidence, to ask questions that reveal the deeper issues, and to become skeptical of reports in the newspaper, without becoming cynics. At that loss-of-innocence moment, we must be sensitive to help the learner avoid becoming a cynic.

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Storyteller, writing teacher, Queen of Revisions, and founder of Mims House <mimshouse.com> publisher, Darcy Pattison has been published in nine languages. Her books, published with Harcourt, Philomel/Penguin, HarperCollins, Arbordale, and Mims House, have received recognition for excellence with starred reviews in Kirkus, Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books, and Publishers Weekly. Three nonfiction nature books have been honored as National Science Teachers Association Outstanding Science Trade Books. The Journey of Oliver K. Woodman (Harcourt 2003) was named an Irma Simonton Black and James H. Black Award for Excellence in Children’s Literature Honor Book and has been published in a Houghton Mifflin textbook. The Nantucket Sea Monster: A Fake News Story is a Junior Library Guild selection and a 2018 National Council of Teachers of English Notable Children’s Book in Language Arts. She’s the 2007 recipient of the Arkansas Governor’s Arts Award for Individual Artist for her work in children’s literature.

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