Keepin' It Real Poster, National Conference of African-American Librarians 2017

Aisha Conner-Gaten, Loyola Marymount University

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC_BY-NC-SA International License.

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/aisha-conner-gaten/
Introduction

Loyola Marymount University organized a campus-wide Inaugural Teach-In on Friday, January 20, 2017. The Teach-In upheld the university’s pedagogical tradition of “educating the whole person” through work for transformative social change. Departments and organizations across campus developed programs and sessions to actively engage the community in lieu of the normal class schedule. Sessions ran for 90 minutes throughout the day and encouraged dialogue surrounding the past, present, and future of the nation.

Following an election cycle fraught with misinformation, fake news, and hoaxes on all sides, William H. Hannon Library acknowledged the impact that these feelings of helplessness and confusion play in their roles as scholars. Librarians conducted information literacy workshops to de-mystify and engage with meaningful current news outlets and specific news stories from all political ideologies.

Design

Considering that almost 30% of all fake news originates from Facebook, workshop development centered born-digital materials and social media networks for managing misinformation. With a short timeline, librarians used a combination of Box cloud storage and a draft Libguide as an outline. Librarians would need to introduce key terms surrounding fake news and present contemporary examples for attendees using online platforms including bias, filter bubbles, verification, and click bait. Once attendees have basic definitions and examples, they could then do active learning activities in pairs and groups.

The workshop incorporated several information literacy concepts:
- Information Has Value
- Information Creation as Process
- Information Evaluation
- Construction and Context of Authority

Activity 1

Present a scenario (in this case a tweet from Donald Trump) that may cause a difficult conversation with a family member. Challenge attendees to examine their feelings about the content of the tweet, the context (i.e., who tweeted: the timing of the tweet, who shared the tweet, others’ reactions to the tweet), consider their values and beliefs, and compare this information to what the attendee already knows.

Activity 2

Challenge attendees to categorize common media outlets in their information networks. Attendees can evaluate outlets based on reliability (e.g., fabricated or false, analytical and complex, etc.) and their purpose (e.g., entertainment, journalism, etc.). Attendees can discuss their choices and learn how outlets may overlap in many categories and their role in the spread of misinformation.

Results/The Workshop

Two consecutive workshop sessions were held during the Inaugural Teach-In Day. Over 90 members of the LMU community attended the workshops including students, staff, and faculty. Many attendees relayed their frustrations about the reliability news and the difficulties of evaluating information via social media. Session outcomes for attendees included:

- Practicing techniques for evaluating the credibility of news stories
- Reflecting upon their reactions to stories and practice identifying and distinguishing between their emotional responses and logical analyses of the items.
- Reflecting critically on their own information behaviors and how they perpetuate the status quo (social justice frame)
- Valuing information and sources from different perspectives
- Critically analyzing sources of information

To better equip attendees with resources for information evaluation on social media, librarians provided a handout with several online tools:

- PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, Snopes
- Reverse google image search or Tiny Eye
- B.S. Detector Browser Extension

Attendees were challenged to consider their own information networks, how they may be in a filter bubble, and were presented tools for expanding their information networks online:

- AllSides
- Flipfeed

To determine student understanding and interest in the workshop content, attendees were asked to fill out a survey following the workshop. This form included:

- How have your feelings about the problem changed over the course of today’s workshop? Has this changed your thinking in any way?
- What is the in interest of the common good in this situation? What changes do you think are needed to address the issues around “fake news”?
- What choices can you make to contribute to the common good? How can you empower others to take action?

Conclusion

Information literacy is a key component of instruction in academic and research libraries. Librarians widely acknowledge the ways in which students receive, evaluate, and disseminate information for their scholarly work. However, there is a knowledge gap when students encounter information in scholarship vs. their daily lives. Libraries must continue to empower students and community members to reflect critically on the news and media sources in their personal information networks. Using an array of online tools (PolitiFact, Snopes, AllSides, etc.), students can engage with public discourse that goes beyond peer review and scholarly authorship.

Specifically at LMU, there will be a series of future workshops focusing on information literacy outside of the classroom. The goals of which include challenging community members to consider differing perspectives in information sharing as well as making connections from the scholarly information cycle to their daily lives as professionals and civically engaged users.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the LMU Librarians who brainstormed, co-created, and co-facilitated the workshop materials and event including Elisa Slater Acosta, Jennifer Masunaga, and Desirae Zingarelli-Sweet. Thank you to the William H. Hannon Library for their support and commitment to supporting students and information literacy in a world of misinformation.

Sources
