

Teaching University Students Lateral Reading to Detect Disinformation and Misinformation

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Abstract : University students may have been born in the digital age, but they need to be taught the critical thinking skills to detect misinformation and social media manipulation online. In recent years, librarians have been active in designing instructional methods to help students learn information evaluation skills. At the University of Idaho Library (USA), librarians have developed new teaching methods for these skills. Last academic year, when classes were taught via Zoom, librarians taught these skills to an online session of each first-year rhetoric and composition course. In the Zoom sessions, students were placed in breakout groups where they practiced using an evaluation method known as lateral reading. Online collaborative software was used to give each group an evaluative task and break the task into steps. Groups reported back to the full class. Students learned to look at an information source, then search outside the source to find information about the organization, publisher or author, before evaluating the source itself. Class level pre-and post-test comparison results showed students learned better techniques for evaluation than they knew before instruction.

Keywords : critical thinking, information evaluation, information literacy instruction, lateral reading.

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