

1. Introduction

Questions Concerning Technology (the questions start about halfway through the post)

2. The problem - The world has changed but our approach to information literacy largely hasn't

A. We don't systematically teach information literacy (Breakstone and Wineburg interview)

B. To the extent we do teach it - we often use methods and strategies for a pre-digital age and that's a problem

1. The attention economy
2. Checklists, The duck test, critical thinking (deep and rigorous analysis) and the problems associated with these strategies (PDK, LATimes)
3. McGrew and Wineburg (2107) and Breakstone, Smith, et. al (2021), SHEG's Civic Online Reasoning Project (to 1:20) and others demonstrate that these older strategies fail when applied to the online environment.

C. The dangers of not teaching digital information literacy

1. Threats to our civic and physical health
2. Epistemic nihilism
3. Radicalization (Dylan Roof from SPLC)

3. Solutions - Digital information literacy techniques designed for the digital age

A. Acknowledgements and resources - Wineburg and Caulfield

The methods they describe are explained in depth in Mike Caulfield's online textbook Web Literacy for Student Fact Checkers, 2017, Caulfield's more streamlined multi-media Check Please! Starter course, and in the Canadian CIVIX made for high school multimedia project CTRL-F. A variety of video, print and curricular resources can also be found at SHEG's Civic Online Reasoning project.

B. The goal - helping students create habits that will lead them to be better more ethical consumers and producers of information

C. The SIFT method - A technique that leverages the strengths of the Web to help students overcome the problems of the Web

1. **Stop**

- Exercise click restraint
- Self reflection
- Do you know and trust the site
- Avoid rabbit holes

2. **Investigate the Source**

- Lateral Reading
- Just add Wikipedia
- Control-F (Command-F on a Mac)
- Bias v. agenda /advocacy v. journalism - the "standards and practices pages of the Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times; Broadcast outlets such as NPR and the big three press agencies AP, Reuters and AFP.
- Evaluating expertise - Look for consensus/right domain knowledge views in context of the field

Practice Investigating sources

- Alligator (prompt)
- MH17 (Prompt)
- Smoke-free (prompt)

- [SIFTing: UN Dance Protesting Nikki Haley \(Prompt\)](#)

3. **Find trusted/better coverage of the claim, check if some other reputable organization has already verified the claim**

- Google news search
- Fact check sites: [Snopes](#), [factcheck.org](#), [Politifact](#), [Fact Checker \(Washington Post\)](#)

Practice finding trusted/better coverage of the claim

- [SIFTing: UN Dance Protesting Nikki Haley \(Prompt\)](#)
- [SIFTing: ATM rats \(prompt\)](#)

4. **Trace claims quotes and media to the original context**

- Recontextualize
- Look out for reframing
- Be aware of deceptive/clickbait headlines

Practice tracing claims quotes and media to the original context

- [Beer Tax \(Prompt\)](#)
- [Guns In Schools \(prompt\)](#)

D. The SIFT method in action - Sample from the web posted yesterday

Begin with this story:

[Coronavirus Spreading Among the Vaccinated in Highly Vaccinated Countries, August 3, 2021](#)

The article suggests that vaccines are ineffective since, in some places, COVID cases amongst vaccinated people are rising while declining amongst the unvaccinated. The article also suggests that highly vaccinated countries are seeing increases in the incidence of COVID. The article concludes by suggesting that the vaccines may be causing a rise in variant strains of the virus.

All of this is serious and troublesome news.

Now, we could dive down the rabbit hole and work on fact checking the claims, but let's apply SIFT and see what happens.

What do we know from the source:

- The website on which the article appears - [mercola.com](#)
- The source of the article - The Vaccine Reaction
- The article quotes an interview with French Nobel laureate Luc Montagnier by French documentary maker Pierre Barnérias.
- The article is filled with footnotes

1. **Stop.** If this article makes you angry or feel validated, don't follow your gut - investigate further. It precisely when we have these sorts of reactions that we need to investigate further before acting.

2. **Investigate the source**

Try Googling [mercola.com](#) or try just adding Wikipedia to the root url

This takes us to the [Wikipedia page on Joseph Mercola](#)

Using CTRL-F we search for [mercola.com](#) to see if there is a connection between the website and the subject of this Wikipedia page

Next we can just add Wikipedia to the source of the article - The Vaccine Reaction (put it in quotation marks) - That pulls up this page [National Vaccine Information Center - Wikipedia](#). We note that the funding of this group comes from the same Dr. Mercola. Visiting the [National Vaccine Information Center](#) we learn that the President of this group runs the website that authored the article - the [vaccinereaction.org](#)

If this wasn't enough you could also just add wikipedia to the [Nobel laureate](#) or the [documentary filmmaker](#) that interviewed him.

With each of these sources, think about the distinction between bias and agenda.

If we were doing real research, this would have taken less than five minutes, and we would have dismissed the source and moved on. But let's continue the process to illustrate its usefulness.

3. Find trusted/better coverage of the claim

Googling "countries with higher vaccination rates have more covid snopes" leads to the following articles:

[Fact Check-Data shows COVID-19 vaccines have saved thousands of lives; contrary claims have taken a PHE report out of context | Reuters](#)

[Posts mislead on Israel vaccine data AP](#)

Googling "fact check vaccines led to delta variant" leads to the following article:

[Fact Check-Delta variant did not come from the COVID-19 vaccine | Reuters](#)

4. Trace claims to the original source to restore context or escape deceptive framing

The source provides footnotes and links to its sources. While some of the sources clearly have an agenda, others, like *Business Insider*, *The Jerusalem Post* and the *UK Zoe COVID Study*. If you were employing a checklist strategy, you might conclude that this makes the source credible. But examining the claims made in "The Vaccine Reaction" article compared with these articles reveals a disconnect. The article is clearly implying that vaccination does not prevent COVID or at the very least offers little protection. It also suggests that the more heavily vaccinated countries are at greater risk. The evidence they use to support this says something entirely different.:

Here is the article cited from the Zoe study: [New cases plateau ahead of Freedom Day](#)

Here is the article from *Business Insider*: [Almost Half UK COVID Cases in People With 1 Vaccine Dose, Cases Mild](#)

Here is the article from the Jerusalem Post: [Anti-vaxxers hijacking Israel's COVID data - here's why they are wrong - The Jerusalem Post](#)

As you can see, reframing matters.

- E. Helping students do this means helping them establish good internet habits. Habits are created through practice and repetition.
- F. This is a work in progress. What would you like to see improved?