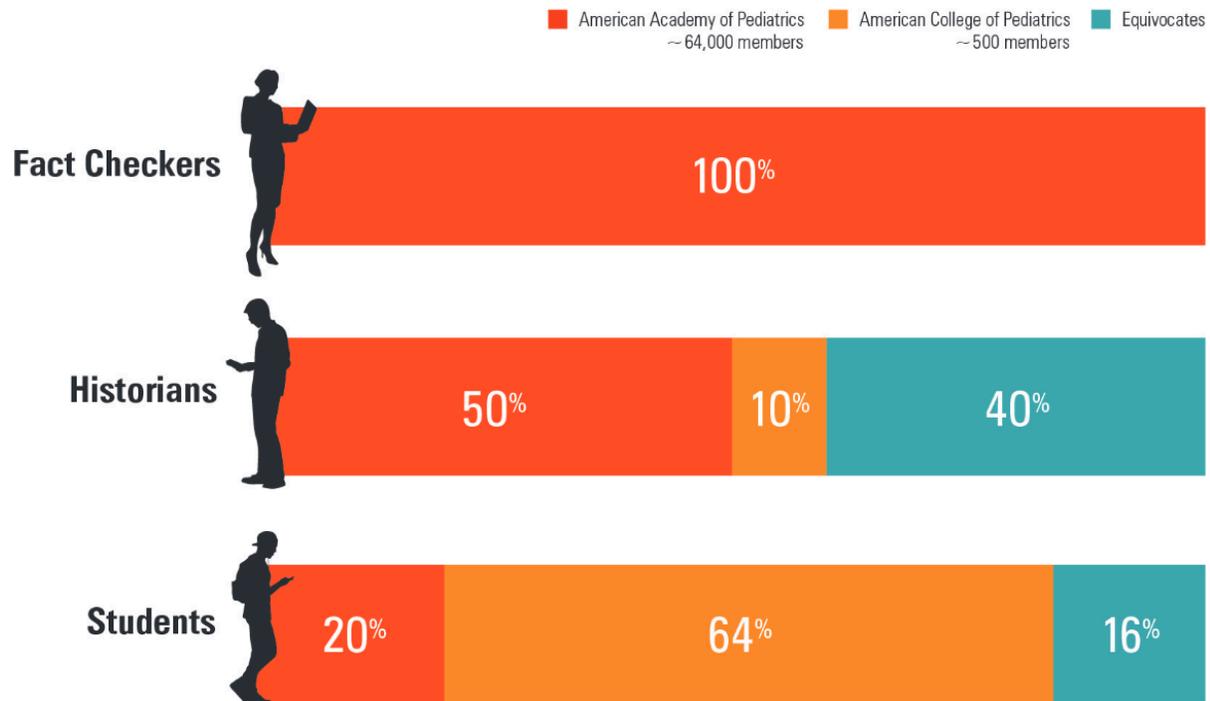


Task 1



Accessed on 8.22.21 at https://www.hendrix.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Faculty_Resources/Teaching_and_Learning/EvaluatingDigitalInformation.pdf

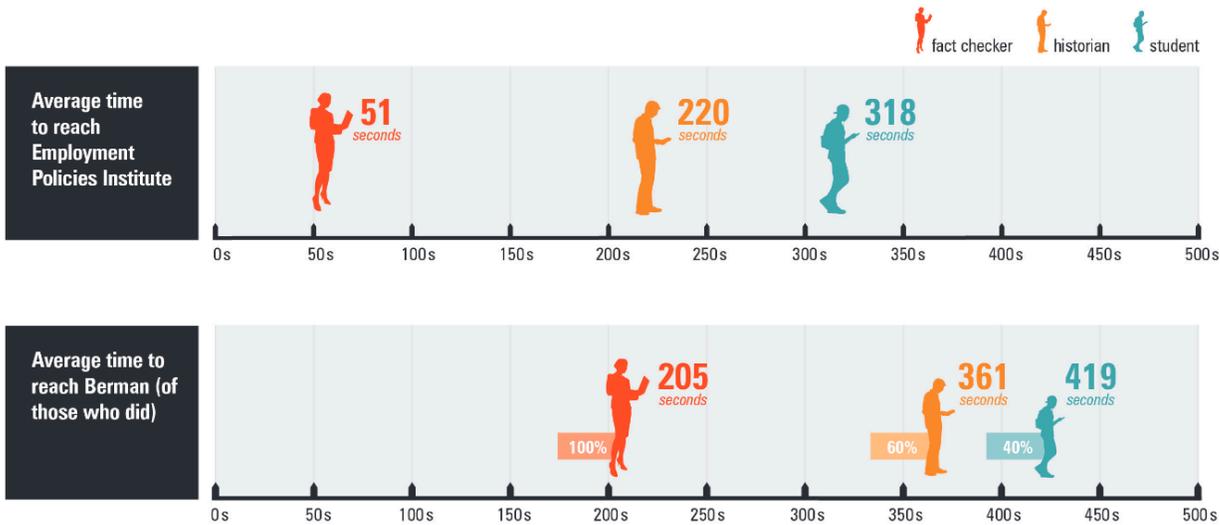
Productive:

- Taking bearings
- Learn about the organization behind the site by conducting Google and Wikipedia searches
- Leave the site you are looking for to see what the wider web says
- Determine whether the state has an agenda

Counter productive:

- Vertical reading without taking bearings
- Viewing citations, links or footnotes as suggestive of credibility without further investigation (citations alone say nothing about credibility)
- Judgments based on the “feel” of the site
- Judgments based on the graphical design of the site
- Judgments based on the “feel” of the site

Task 2



Productive:

- Lateral reading
- Using the about page to identify the source so that source can be investigated on other sites
- Using google search to help find trusted sources that discuss the source

Counter productive:

- Using the about page uncritically
- Vertical reading only
- “Fluttering” (non systematically playing with a site and its links)

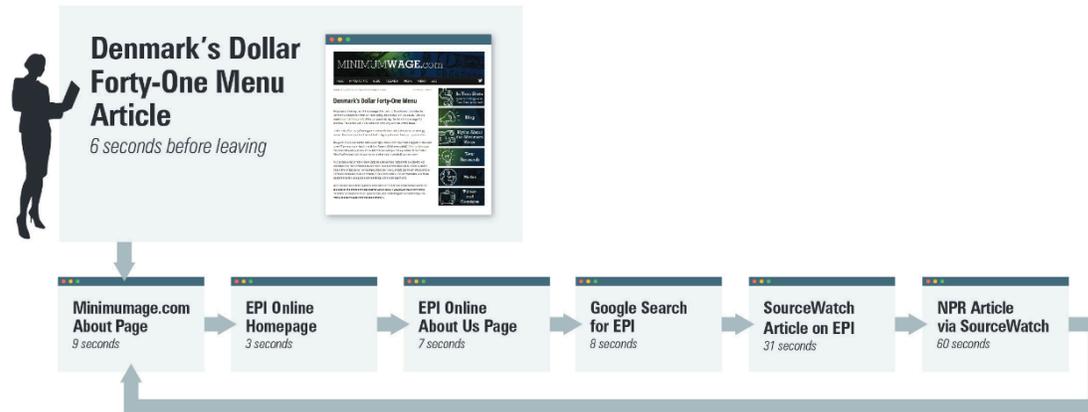
Task 3

Productive:

- Click restraint (looking at url, title, blurb before clicking on search results)
- Lateral reading using known trusted sources
- lateral reading using Wikipedia
- Use command F to identify key terms and phrases in a page to save time

Counter productive:

- Verifying unknown sites on the basis of other unknown sites
- Failing to ask if sites used for verification had an agenda
- Going down rabbit holes



Taking Bearings

“The answer lies with two concepts we introduced earlier: taking bearings and lateral reading. In order to take bearings, this imperative is issued to the searcher: before diving too deeply into unfamiliar digital content, make a plan for moving forward. Taking bearings is what sailors, aviators, and hikers do to plot their course toward a desired destination. Although correct bearings do not guarantee that travelers will reach that destination, heading in the right direction substantially increases their chances. To take bearings, web searchers obviously don’t use a physical compass. But they need metaphorical compasses just as much as hikers need real ones.” (37)

Lateral reading v. vertical reading

“In an Internet teeming with cloaked sites and astroturfers (front groups pretending to be grassroots efforts), taking bearings often assumes the form of lateral reading. When reading laterally, one leaves a website and opens new tabs along a horizontal axis in order to use the resources of the Internet to learn more about a site and its claims. Lateral reading contrasts with vertical reading. Reading vertically, our eyes go up and down a screen to evaluate the features of a site. Does it look professional, free of typos and banner ads? Does it quote well-known sources? Are bias or faulty logic detectable? In contrast, lateral readers paid little attention to such features, leaping off a site after a few seconds and opening new tabs. They investigated a site by leaving it.” (38)

Understanding how the internet works

“Knowledge of sources was therefore necessary but not sufficient. Fact checkers also possessed knowledge of online structures, particularly how search results are organized and presented. They knew that the first result was not necessarily the most authoritative, and they spent time scrolling through results, often scanning the entire first page (and sometimes the second and third) before clicking on any links. They understood how search engine optimizers use sophisticated keywords and other techniques to game results, pushing some sites to the front of the line and more authoritative information to the back. Students, on the other hand,

often clicked on the first results, rarely articulating a rationale for why they selected them (a finding well-documented by others; e.g., Hargittai et al., 2010; Kirschner & Von Merriënboer, 2013; Pan et al., 2007). (39)

The dangers of the duck test

“Something similar was going on when historians and college students evaluated the site of American College of Pediatricians. The site resembled what participants expected from a bona fide medical venue: an impressive sounding name; an official logo and motto (“Best for Children”); an .org URL; and no overt signs that might raise eyebrows (flashing banner ads, misspellings, irregular fonts, and broken links). Moreover, the article about bullying conformed to what people expect from a scientific text (Meyer, 2017): it had an abstract, brief section headings, and references studded with names of reputable journals like Pediatrics and Journal of Criminology.” (40-1)

The importance of click restraint

Fact checkers took longer not because of faulty search strategies or unhelpful keywords, but because they slowed down to review search results. They showed click restraint. Before pressing on any of the results, they mined Google’s snippets for the wealth of information they contain. They examined each URL, considered the source of the information, and scanned the brief but fecund sentence fragments before alighting on a link to click. A searcher’s first click is often destiny, either putting searchers on a path toward warranted conclusions or sending them into the wilderness of infinite regress. Click restraint tips the balance toward the former. (42)

Close reading should only be done after taking bearings

Close reading, the careful, analytic search for pattern, detail, and nuance, is essential to any thoughtful curriculum (Shanahan, 2012; Wolf, 2007). But when the goal is to quickly get up to speed, the close reading of a digital source, when one doesn’t yet know if the source can be trusted (or is what it says it is)—proves to be a colossal waste of time. (43)

Checklists are problematic

Checkers never consulted a list of questions before initiating a search. The elements emphasized by the checklists—what an organization claims on its “About” page, an .org URL, a physical address and contact information—were taken with a grain of salt. That’s because the checklist approach cuts searchers off from the most efficient route to learning more about a site: finding out what the rest of the web has to say. This was the biggest lesson we learned from watching these experts: They evaluated unfamiliar websites by leaving them. For fact checkers, the direct route to credibility was indirect. (45)

The importance of Medium specific strategies

“Rather than making students slog through strings of questions about easily manipulated features on a single website, we should be teaching them that the World Wide Web is, in the words of blogger and Internet critic Mike Caulfield (2017), “a web, and the way to establish authority and truth is to use its web-like properties.” This is what professional fact checkers do. (46)“