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A New Approach to Evaluating Information: A Reflection on RADAR

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Use Your Radar: Evaluating Information



RELEVANCE

Information must be relevant for it to matter to your research. If there is zero relevance, keep looking!

"Does this information answer my research question?"
"Is this information related to my topic?"
"What is the intended audience of this information?"
"Is this from my discipline? If not, is it okay to cite interdisciplinary work?"



AUTHORITY

Assessing the credibility of the creator of a work is important. This applies to the author, the publisher, and any other person or body responsible for creation of the information at hand.

"Who created this information? Who did they cite?"
"Is the author a prominent scholar in the field?"
"Who is the author affiliated with? An institution or business?"
"Does anyone else cite this author?"
"Is there contact information included? Can/Should I contact the author for more information?"



DATE

Currency is important because information can quickly become outdated. However, just because something is 'old' does not mean it is necessarily 'bad'. It all depends on the discipline/topic. A good rule of thumb is within the past 10 years, but use your best judgement.

"When was this information created or last updated?"
"Do I require the most up-to-date information?"
"Is the information outdated or irrelevant?"
"Does my field require the latest and greatest?"
"If older, is this a seminal or landmark study?"
"Could I still use this for historical context?"



APPEARANCE

How the information is presented can often indicate whether or not the source is reputable or scholarly. Academic works are usually professional looking with little advertising, employing the same general model (abstract, citations, etc.)

"Is the information presented in a professional/academic manner?"
"Is this information presented similar to other scholarly formats?"
"Is the information peer-reviewed? In an academic journal?"
"Are there references to support the author's argument? Are they accurate?"



REASON

Understanding why the information was created in the first place is critical to evaluating its quality.

"Why is this information available?"
"Was this information created to inform, sell, educate, entertain, or persuade?"
"Is the information presented in an academic journal?"
"Is this a research study? Does the author cite their methods? Their data?"
"Is the authors intention for publishing this information clear?"

Adapted from Jane Mandaliolis (2013). RADAR: An approach for helping students evaluate Internet sources. *Journal of Information Science*, 39(4), 470-478.



Importance of Evaluating Resources

Students: The ability to critically evaluate information is a life-long skill. Post-secondary students must learn how to properly evaluate resources to become more efficient and skilled researchers as demonstrated by the ability to quickly judge and assess information and information sources. Students will be more successful in their studies if they are able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of information and its source. Students will be able to apply this skill to all forms of information they encounter beyond their academic studies.

Instructors: Teaching the evaluation of information will help students succeed in their academic pursuits. Evaluating information is an essential critical thinking skill that will help students develop into competent researchers and scholars. Instruction on the evaluation of information can be done independently or integrated into existing lesson plans.

Librarians: Information literacy (IL) is a large component of instructional priorities. Informed by Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) documents, librarians must be mindful of the way they instruct students on the evaluation of information. By teaching the critical evaluation of information as part of library instruction, librarians are contributing to the development of life-long learners who understand the nature of the information society and recognize the value of information itself.

Why RADAR?

RADAR is a framework conceptualized by Jane Mandaliolis (2013) of the American College of Greece as an approach to helping students evaluate internet resources. RADAR is useful for librarians teaching information literacy as it can be applied to all types information and information sources. It is both an acronym and a palindrome, and can be taught using any number of metaphors that imply "using one's RADAR" to navigate through the "sea" or "space" of information. RADAR can be the "navigation equipment" (Mandaliolis, 2013, p. 472) that helps one get the best information during their search while avoiding less favourable information and information sources.

RADAR seeks to act as an alternative option to the widely used CRAAP Test (Blakeslee, 2004). While CRAAP has value in its humour and memorability, there were previously few valuable alternatives for instructors looking for a more meaningful approach to the instruction of evaluating information. RADAR is a more professional approach to this topic that works similarly to the CRAAP test; however, RADAR implies more of a scale rather than a yes/no checklist. RADAR also works through multiple sociocultural lenses as it has the same meaning and spelling in most languages, while CRAAP stems from vulgar slang that may lose meaning when taught to certain cultural groups.

What We Did and Future Research

- Taught RADAR in a series of 2nd year Psychology Research Methods library instruction workshops.
- Students found the acronym to be a helpful tool for remembering the factors to consider when critically evaluating information, and knew how to apply the elements of RADAR in their research.
- In a post-workshop assessment, students acknowledged the usefulness of RADAR as a tool for evaluating information.
- Future research could compare RADAR with CRAAP in terms of each tools' relative effectiveness in helping students evaluate resources.

Application

RADAR can be taught in a variety of ways. It can be included in one-shot IL sessions, developed as a full independent lesson plan, and/or integrated into course-level learning outcomes. For librarians, RADAR can simply replace the CRAAP Test or other methods of teaching information evaluation, including but not limited to video tutorials, e-learning modules, and active learning exercises.

Instructors can partner with librarians in developing and incorporating IL into their own lesson plans and courses in order to ensure their students are developing well-rounded 21st century literacy skills. Instructors and librarians can also partner to decide on a preferred approach to teaching information evaluation.



References

Association of College & Research Libraries, *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (Chicago, 2000).

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Blakeslee, S. (2004). The CRAAP test. *LOEX Quarterly*, 31(3), 4.

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