

Demystifying the Fact-Checking Process: Using Lateral Reading with First-Year Students

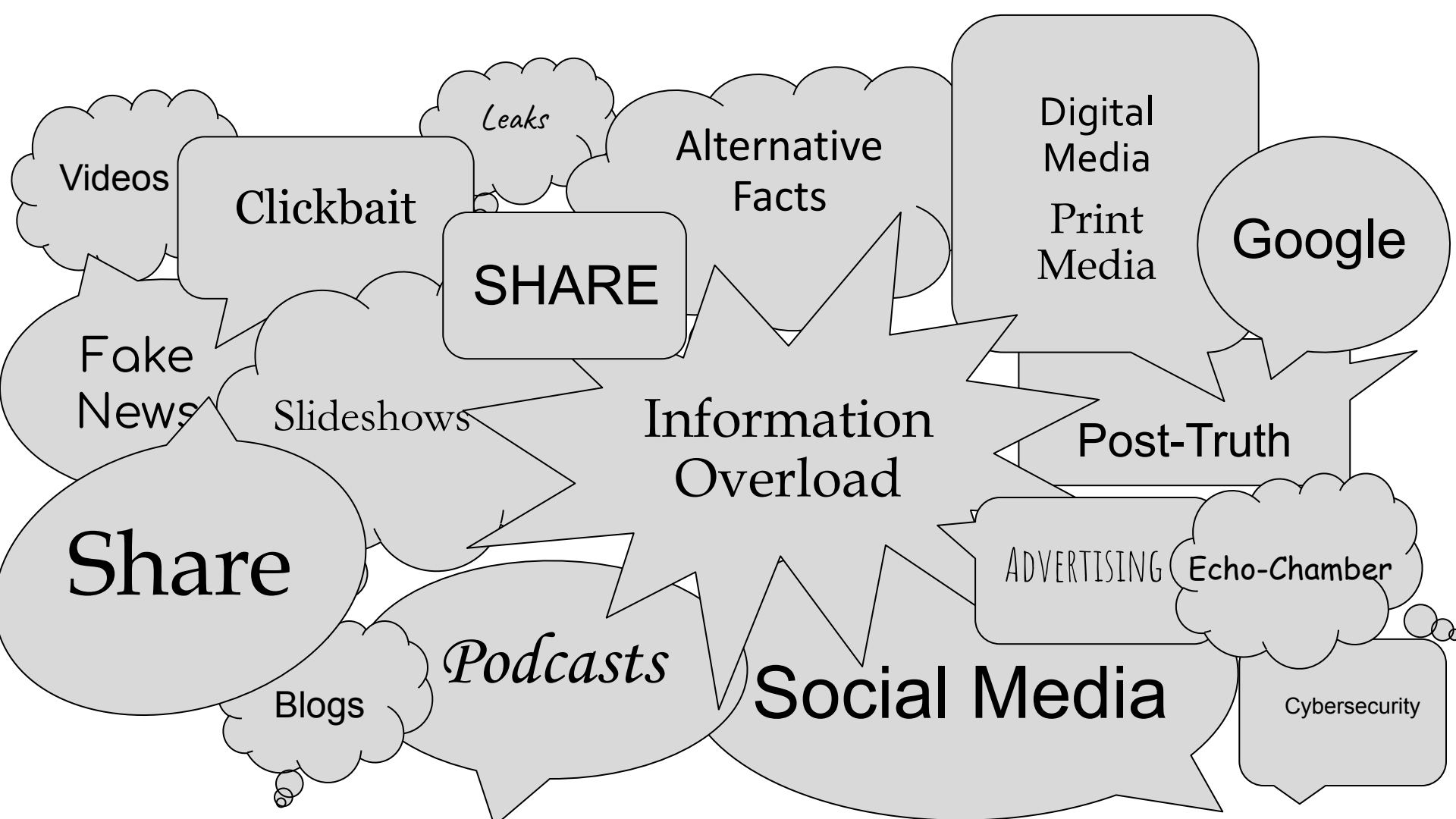
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Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to distinguish between lateral and vertical reading and their impact on student evaluation behaviors.
2. Participants will be able to take away strategies presented in the session to help students evaluate information online that can be used across departments on campus.

Students' Evaluation Of Online Sources





Videos

Clickbait

Leaks

Alternative Facts

Digital Media
Print Media

Google

SHARE

Fake News

Slideshows

Information Overload

Post-Truth

Share

ADVERTISING

Echo-Chamber

Blogs

Podcasts

Social Media

Cybersecurity

Our Students' Information-Seeking Behaviors

1. There are many pathways to news--not only on social media.
2. News knows no personal boundaries, so students follow selectively.
3. Tension exists between idealized views of journalism and a distrust of today's news.
4. Students share news on social media as stewards of what's important to know.
5. Traditional standards for evaluating news are increasingly problematic.



Lesson Plan on Lateral Reading

1. Think-Pair-Share Introductory Activity: What factors play into your decision to watch a new movie or listen to new music? *Questions to consider: Do you trust particular critics? Read Rotten Tomatoes? Listen to a podcast that recommends movies or good music? Particular website you go to? etc.*
2. Transition into a whole group discussion about researching with websites (this can include personal research for things like big purchases, traveling, health, etc.): How do you know you are using a good website for your research? What does a reliable website look like? What does an unreliable website look like? How do you know?
(This will help us understand where students are in their thinking processes and their experiences with fact-checking information on websites.)
3. In groups of 2-3, lead students to the minimum wage website (<https://www.minimumwage.com/>). In their groups, students will determine the website's reliability.
 - a. *Prompt for Students: Do whatever you usually do to determine a website's credibility and apply it here. Is this website credible? How do you know? What did you do to determine that this website is credible or not credible?*
4. Whole group discussion on their initial findings of Minimumwage.com: What did students determine about the website? Did they find who created it?
 - Ask students: Did they notice that they stayed on the same website? Explain that what many students just did is called vertical reading.
5. Talk about a different approach: Lateral Reading. What is it? How does it work? Why is it important? Model lateral reading for students: <https://www.acped.org/>
6. Have students look at the minimum wage website again, but reading it laterally. Do they still see the website like they did before? Did they discover anything new about what is going on in the background of this website? Who is producing it?
7. Briefly explain the lateral reading study by SHEG. Who was in the study? How long did fact-checking take when done using lateral reading?
8. Have a group (or two, depending on time) explain their fact-checking process. What did they try? Did they find out the real creator of the site?
9. Discussion on the importance of fact-checking what you see online. You simply cannot tell if a website is credible by staying on the site--even when it is easy to read and well-designed. (Talk about political agendas, like anti-vaxxers, and how this complicates matters.)
10. Summarize lateral reading and its importance. Exit Slip: What are students' thoughts on their experiences of vertical and lateral reading? Name one important thing you learned in class today? How will you use this new skill in the future?

Opening Question

Think about a movie you recently watched in theaters or are planning to watch.

What factors play into your decision to watch a new movie?

Some things to consider:

- Do you trust certain critics? Websites? Listen to a podcast that recommends movies? Trust particular friends' opinions?

www.minimumwage.com

1. Is this website credible? Please explain.
2. Who is the organization or author behind this website? Are they credible?



Vertical Reading

- Staying within a website to evaluate its reliability
- Looking for credibility clues
 - Reference list
 - About us
 - Links to outside sources



Lateral Reading

- Before diving too deeply into unfamiliar digital content, making a plan for moving forward
- Thinking about websites as a maze filled with trap doors and blind alleys, where things are not always what they seem



Lateral Reading

- Investigating a site by leaving it
- Leaving a site after a quick scan and opening up new browser tabs in order to judge the credibility of the original site



The College v. The Academy

- [The American College of Pediatricians](#)



- [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#)



www.minimumwage.com

1. Is this website credible? Please explain.
2. Who is the organization or author behind this website? Are they credible?



Exit Slip

1. What is at least one thing you learned in this session today?
2. How do you think you will use this new knowledge or skill in the future?

Student Responses

“Always check who controls the website/source. This is important b/c you never know if it’s trustworthy/partial truth.”

“I learned how to research deeper and fully understand who and where these websites [are coming from] before using them.”

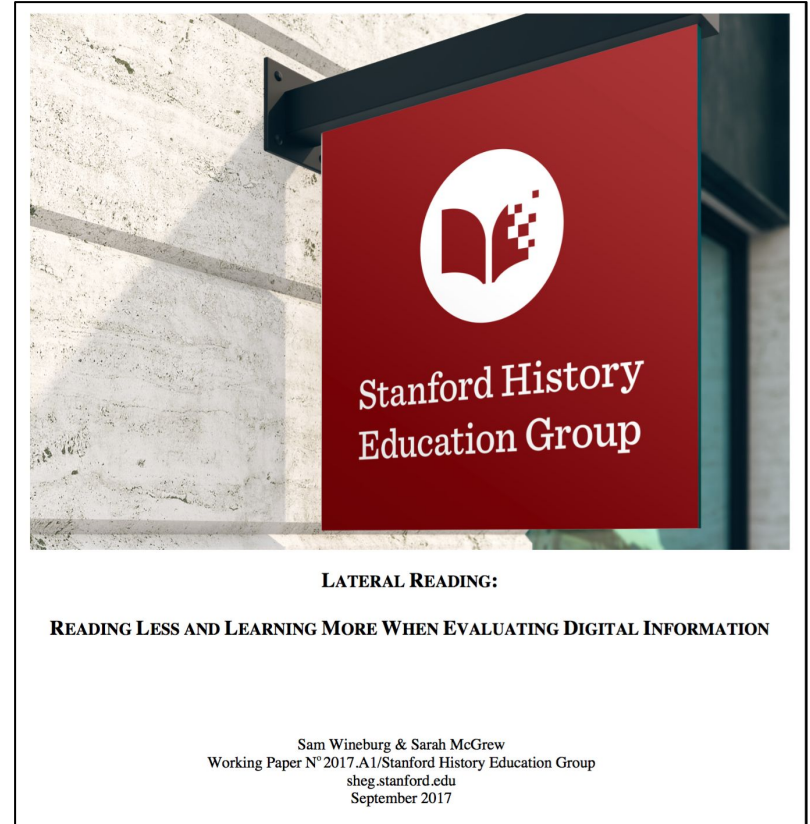
“One thing I learned was how to make sure sources are fact checked. I can use this when looking for sources in the future for papers or potentially for a job.”

“How easy it is to create a phony website ... I will probably fact-check or use lateral reading way more.”

“It’s important to understand who is trying to present information to you and their purpose and if it is credible.”

Lateral Reading

- Lateral Reading: Reading Less and Learning More (2017)
- Source evaluation strategies
- Stanford undergraduates, history PhDs, and professional fact checkers



Lateral Reading

- PhDs and undergraduates read *vertically*, staying within a website to evaluate its reliability.
- Fact checkers read *laterally*, leaving a site after a quick scan and opening up new browser tabs in order to judge the credibility of the original site.

Figure 1. Percentage of participants in each group selecting the College or the Academy as more reliable.

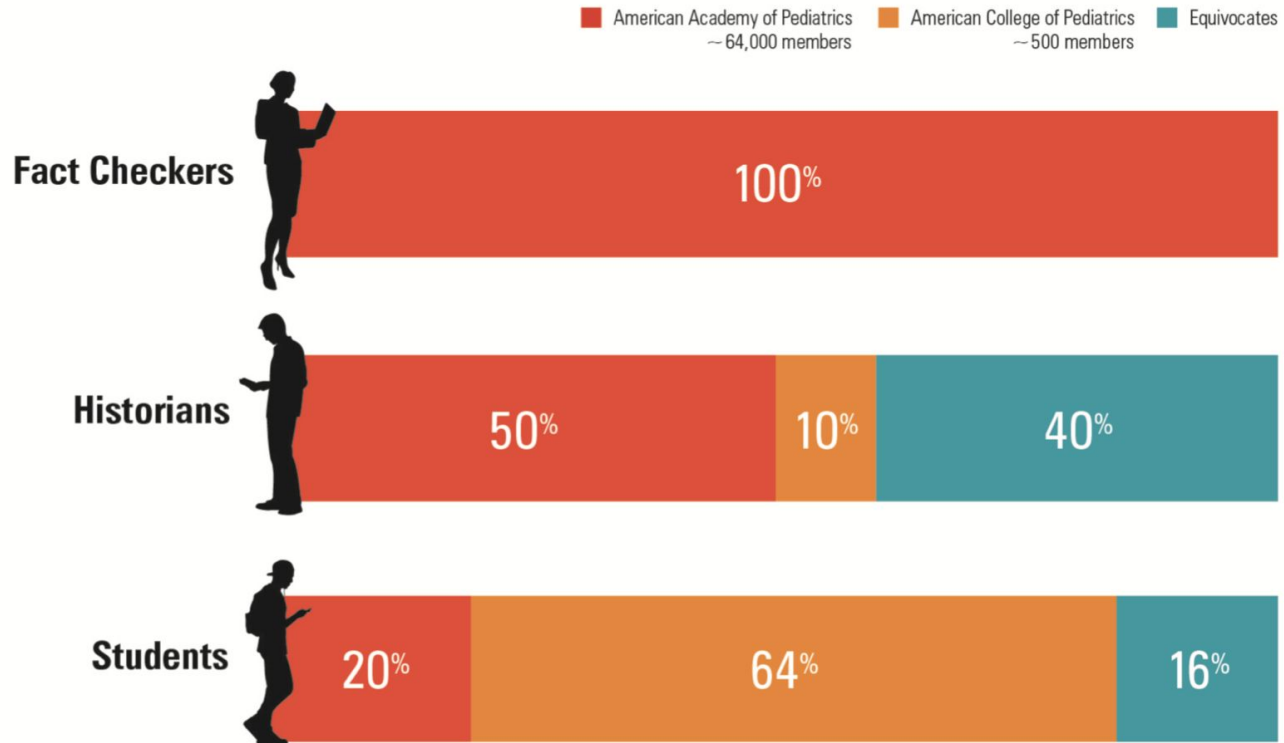


Figure 4. Average time for participants to determine Employment Policies Institute's sponsorship of minimuwage.com; average time and percentage of each participant group to determine Richard Berman or Berman and Company's sponsorship of both websites.

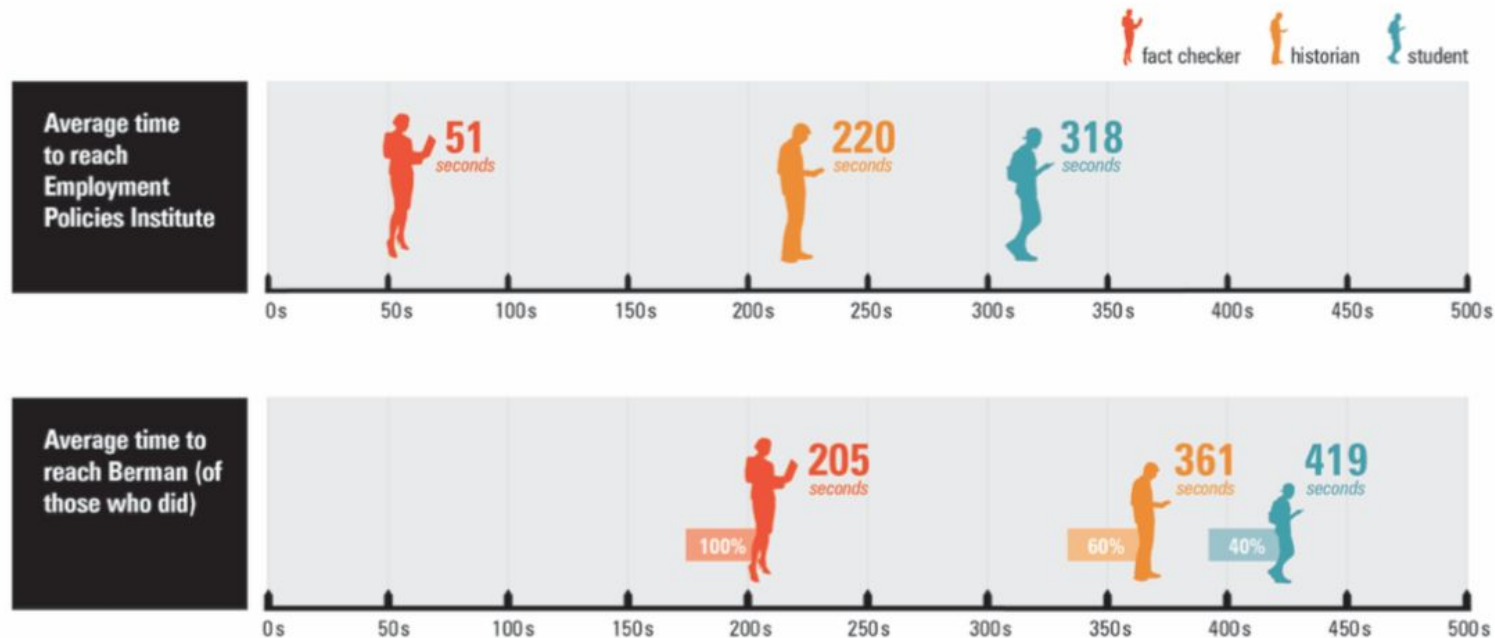
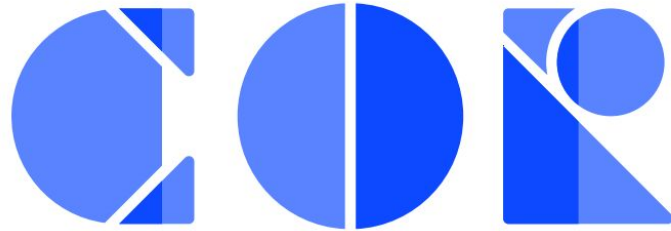


Figure 5. Checker A's lateral reading.



SHEG's Online Curriculum



**Civics Online
Reasoning**

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