

Assessing College Students' Everyday Information Seeking: Implications for Information Literacy Instruction

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Session Agenda

Context for the Study

1

Previous Research

2

Our Study

3

Preliminary Findings

4

Next Steps

5

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1. Context



1

University of Northern Colorado

- Greeley, Colorado
- Total enrollment: 9,881
- Newly designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
- 42% of undergrads are first-generation students





1

Information Literacy at UNC

Course Embedded Instruction

- **ENG 123**—English Composition
- **UNIV 101**—First Year Experience
- Various subject-specific instruction as requested

Credit Bearing Instruction

- **LIB 123**—Intro to Library Research
- **LIB 150**—Intro to Undergraduate Research
- **LIB 160**—Criminal Justice Library Research
- **LIB 170**—Communication Sciences and Disorders Library Research
- **LIB 180**—History Library Research
- **LIB 251**—Research as Inquiry



1

Shared SLOs

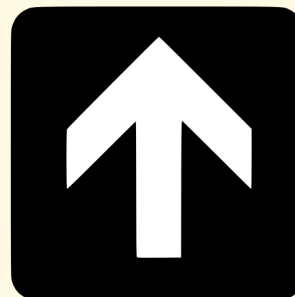
After completing a 100-level LIB course, students will be able to—



Develop a
research
process

Demonstrate
effective
search
strategies

Evaluate
information



Develop a
coherent
analysis of
evidence
from multiple
sources

Use
information
ethically



Information Literacy at UNC

Teaching Strategies for Evaluation

- Understanding the source type
- Determining the relevance of a source given a specific issue or topic
- Deciding what contextual factors make an author credible or authoritative
- Identifying factors that may lead to bias
- Considering the intended audience
- Understanding how the timeliness of a source may impact its usefulness or how it is interpreted
- Focusing on the context



Problem

Aim

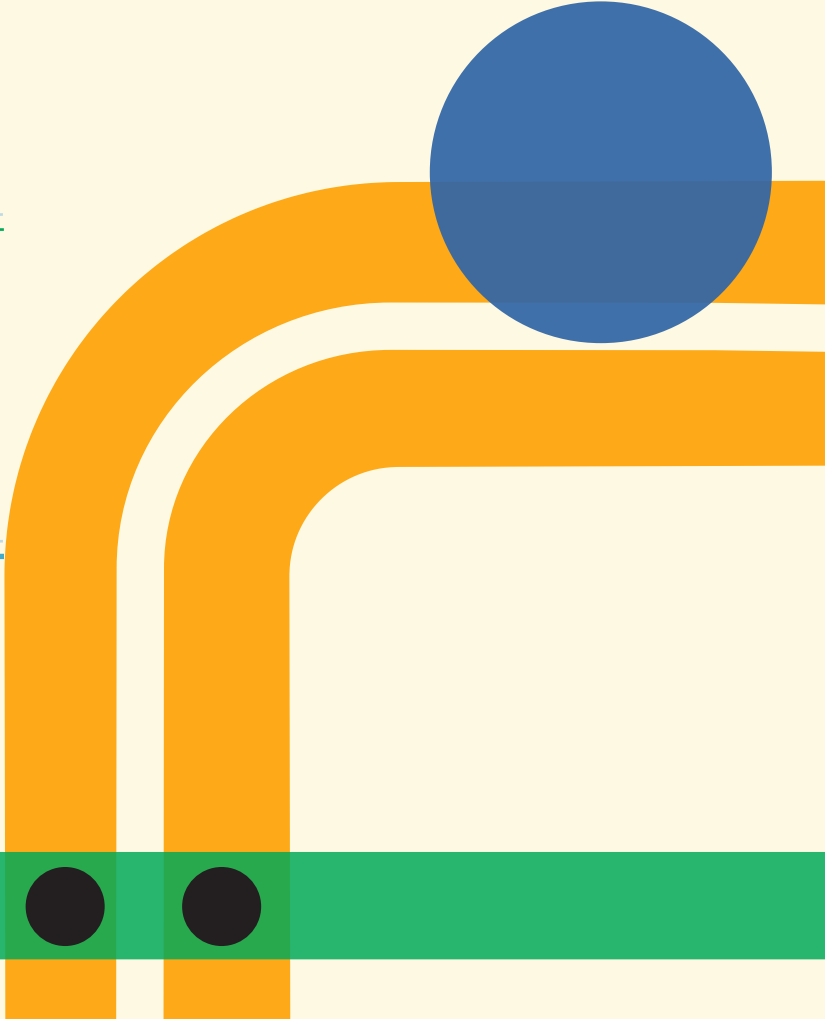
students apply what they learn about evaluating information in class to everyday life (consumption of news, civic engagement, etc.)

Problem

no evidence of knowledge transfer and concern about misinformation

What we did

collected data about how students think about evaluating information as they actively seek sources



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2. Previous Research



2

What do you think?

Menti.com— use code: 27 44 32 3

How do college students find information in their daily lives?





2

Previous Research

Everyday life information seeking—

product purchases



news/civic activity

entertainment



health



2

Common Search Behaviors

Theme 1: Familiarity/Ease

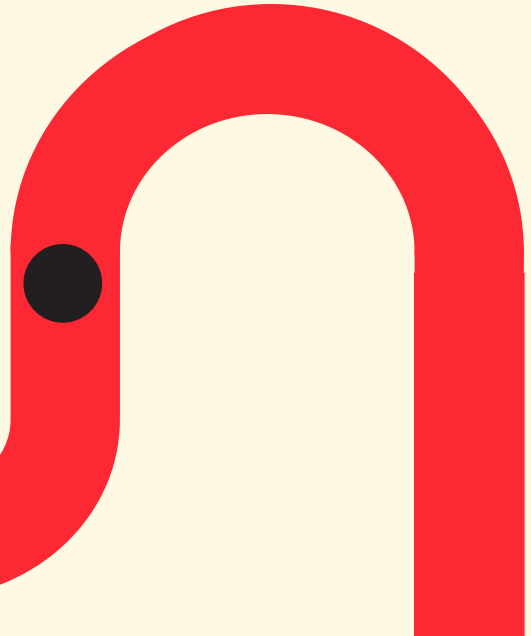
- Defaulting to Google searches for needed information or asking friends and family (Head & Eisenberg, 2011)
- Little to no revision of keywords or search strategy (Senkowski & Branscum, 2015)
- Choosing sources from the first three search results (Senkowski & Branscum, 2015)



Common Search Behaviors

Theme 2: Surface Level Indicators

- Relying on appearance of the site when evaluating sources (Breakstone et al., 2022; McGrew et al., 2018)
- Using domain to judge credibility of sources (Behre, 2022; Breakstone et al., 2022; Buhi et al., 2009; Senkowski & Branscum, 2015)



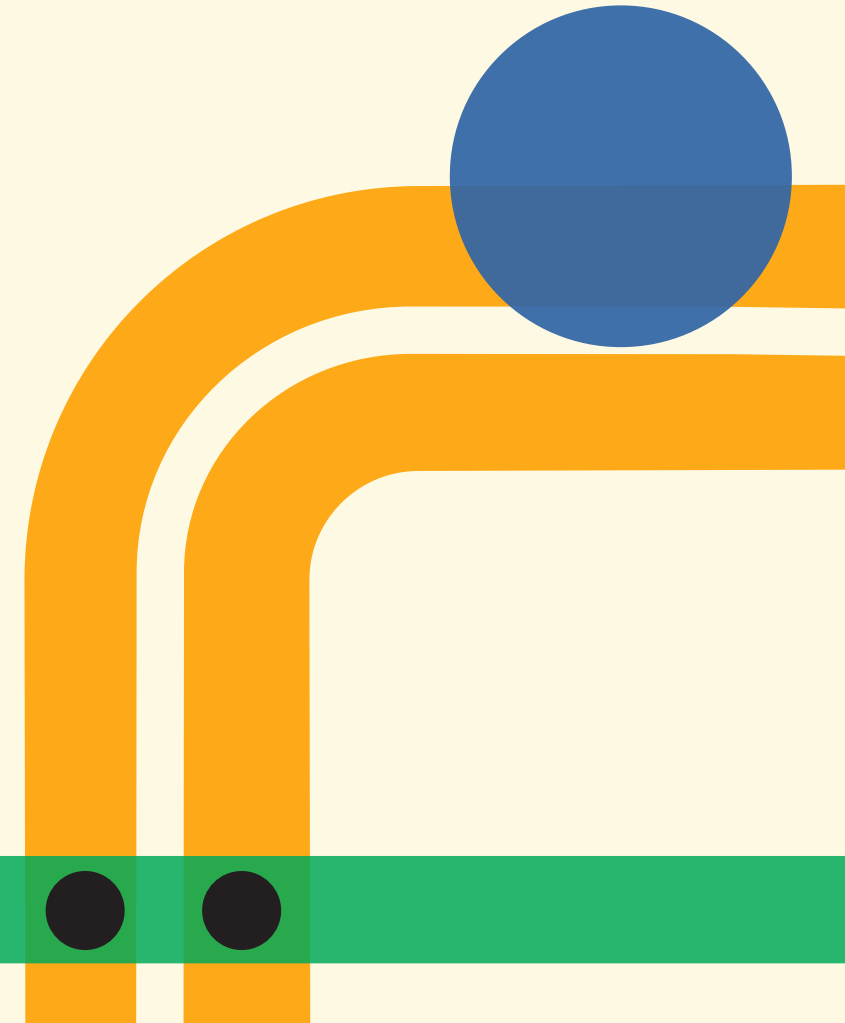


2

Common Search Behaviors

Theme 3: Lack of Investigation

- Not investigating or corroborating information they find (Sendurur, 2018; Kammerer et al., 2021)
- Saying one thing, but doing another—in regards to finding other sources to support or refute the information they found (Kammerer et al, 2021)
- Not investigating authors' credentials (Breakstone et al., 2022; McGrew et al., 2018)





2

Transfer of Learning

Context Matters

- Struggle using traditional evaluation strategies, like currency, relevance, or authority on web or social media sources (Head et al., 2018).
- More difficult time finding clues to evaluate web sources than academic sources (Sei-Cheng, 2015)
- Disconnect between how students and librarians think about information literacy and behaviors (Head et al., 2020; Kocevar-Weidinger et al., 2019)



2

Previous Studies' Methods



- Reliance on self-reported data from students—surveys or interviews
- Review of online tasks—performance evaluation or pre- and post-tests
- Think-aloud protocol



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3. Our Study



Our Research Question

What evaluation strategies do college students who have had information literacy instruction apply to their personal information seeking behaviors?



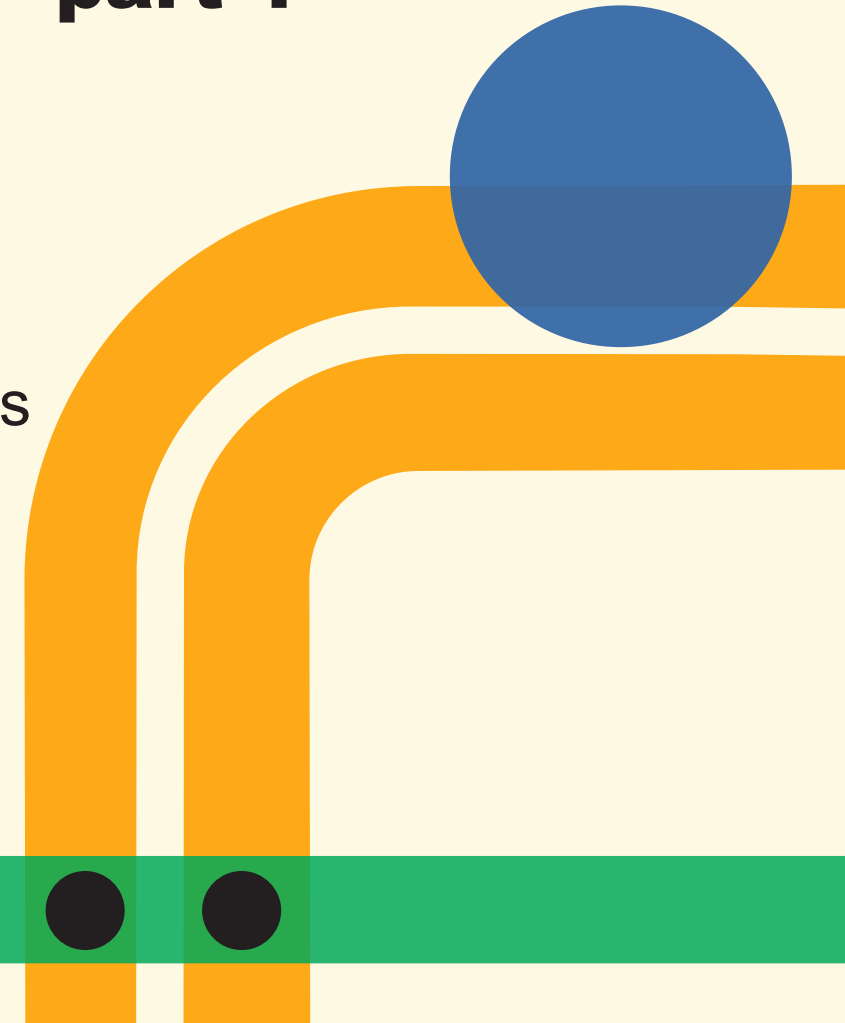
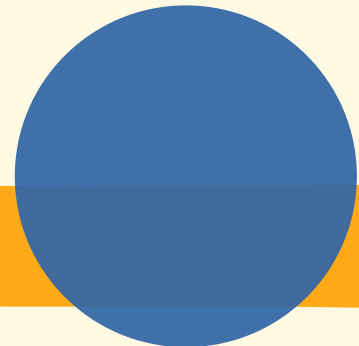


3

Methods

Highlights from Think-Aloud Protocol—part 1

- Recruited six students from 100-level information literacy courses
- Adapted a think-aloud protocol
- Trained student employees to be research assistants and to run sessions





3

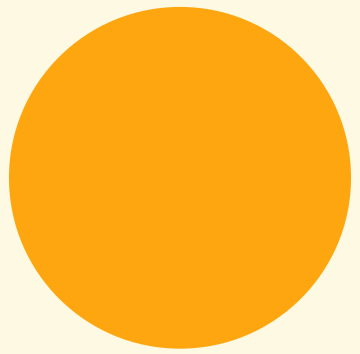
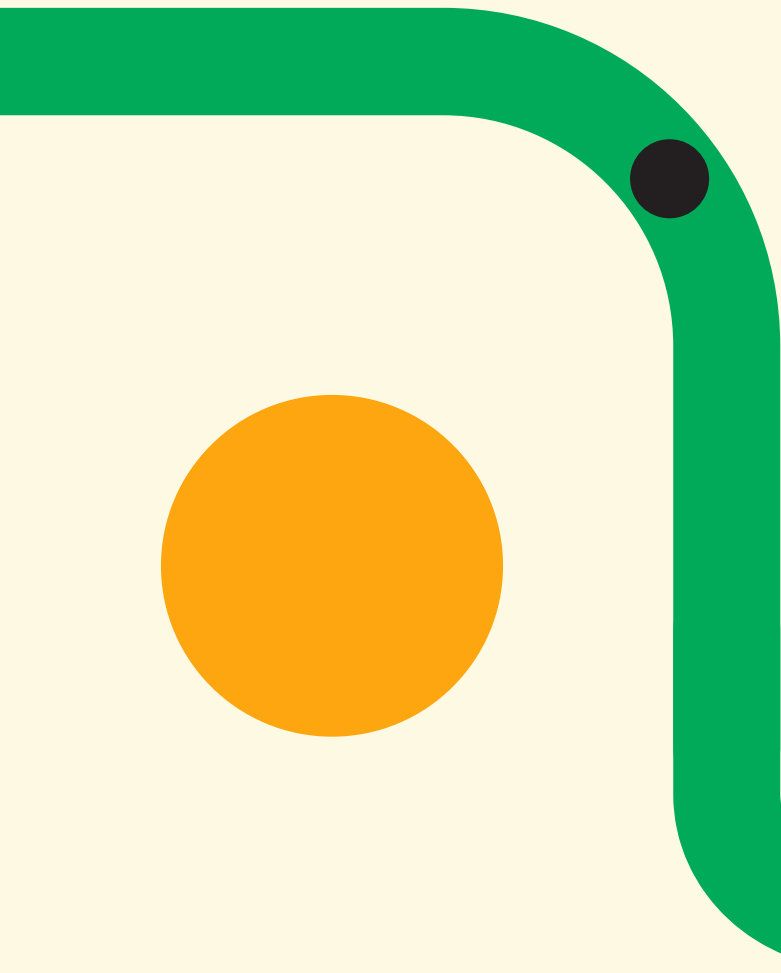
Methods

Highlights from Think-Aloud Protocol—part 2

But yeah, I'll probably stop in the National Archives and just do additional research from there.

- Recorded screen and voice of participants
- Used thematic analysis to identify key behaviors





4. Preliminary Findings





4

Preliminary Findings

Search & Evaluation Strategies

- Corroborating information to verify accuracy

“So, I would probably just read through this and I would go into another tab because I like having multiple sources. If I have just one source, how can I trust it?”



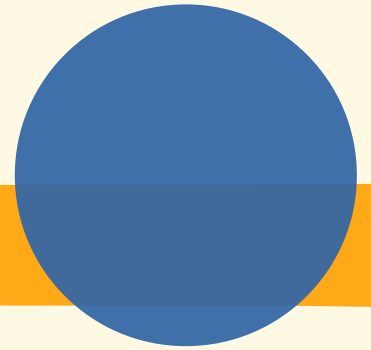
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Preliminary Findings

Search & Evaluation Strategies

- Persevering through challenges to obtain desired information

“But really, they [the sources] were used by the podcast and they are very meticulous researchers, way more than I think most people would ever even do.”



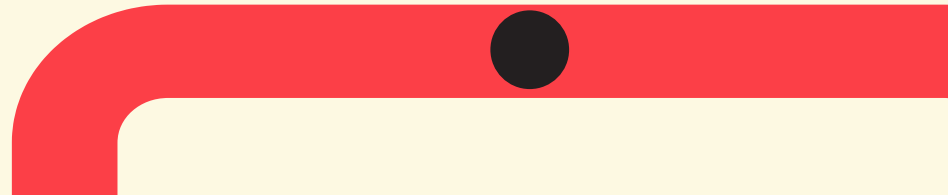


Transfer of Learning

Search & Evaluation Strategies

- Using authority to help determine if a source is good

"And now, like, I'm just going to places I already trust. I trust the New York Times so I'm just looking at, like, if they have anything about UFOs or aliens."





4

Preliminary Findings

Search & Evaluation Strategies

- Being aware of bias and objectivity in sources

“I guess I would just search 2024 presidential election candidates' information and then try to look for something that I feel would give both sides of, like, issues for whatever candidates there are.”



4

Preliminary Findings

Search & Evaluation Strategies

"And I'll open this link, well, it led to a 404 page. So, let's see. Well, since that one looks like a dead end, I'm gonna go back and I want to hear about the congressional hearing."

Lack of search techniques

- No keyword revision
- Selecting from the first few results



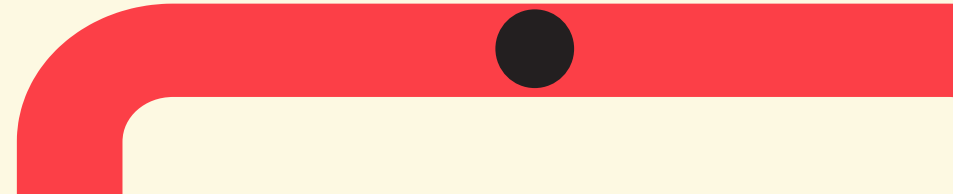
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Preliminary Findings

Knowledge Transfer



- Context around the information need is important
- Criteria such as objectivity and authority resonate
- Keyword or search strategy revision is rare





Limitations

Limitations of Methodology

- Number of participants
- Difficult to replicate everyday life situations
 - Academic setting
 - Library-owned laptop
 - Social media access



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5. Next Steps



5

Adjusting Our Teaching

Building on Existing Student Behaviors

- Demonstrate keyword revision in sample searches
- Discuss strategies for working through roadblocks
- Build on tendencies to examine objectivity or bias
- Practice lateral reading techniques
- Consider strategies for evaluating media sources



5

Piloting Ideas

Information Evaluation in ENG 123 Sessions

Sources to Provide:

- Scholarly journal article
- Website
- Social media post
- Newspaper or magazine article

Questions to Ask:

- Do you consider the author an expert? Why or why not?
- Why do you think this source was created?
- In what research situations would you use this source?



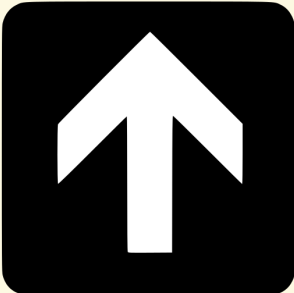
 **5** **Next Steps**

Research trajectory—



1
Start analysis and identify preliminary findings

2
Present preliminary findings



3
Continue data analysis

4
Write up results, including implications for practice

5
Find journal and publish article

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Your Turn

Encouraging Knowledge Transfer

Talk with 1-2 people near you—

- Think about an information literacy skill you would like students to transfer to their everyday lives.
- How do you currently teach that skill?
- In what ways could you alter the activity or lesson plan to encourage students to apply the skill to their everyday life?



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Thank you!

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Research Scenarios

1. Pretend that you are curious about the news stories that the U.S. military and government has secret information on UFOs, and you want to see if this is true or not. **Choose one source that gives you useful information on this topic.**
2. The 2024 presidential election is coming up and there is media and news coverage about different candidates. You may have seen or heard some interesting things in the news about one candidate—pretend you want to find information about a candidate. **Choose one source that you would share with friends about a 2024 presidential candidate.** And just a reminder that we are not interested in what your political views are, but rather what you are thinking as you are searching and choosing something you might share with friends.