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Navigating Online Information Spaces with Lateral Reading: Lessons Learned from Two Librarians Working with Students and Educators

Andrea Baer

Rowan University, baera@rowan.edu

Daniel G. Kipnis

Rowan University, kipnisd@rowan.edu

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Navigating Online Information Spaces with Lateral Reading: Lessons Learned from Two Librarians Working with Students and Educators



Andrea Baer, Humanities Librarian
Daniel G. Kipnis, Life Sciences Librarian
Rowan University Libraries

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Slides: https://rdw.rowan.edu/lib_scholarship/47/

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What is lateral reading?

“Lateral reading” is an approach to online source evaluation. It essentially involves quickly moving off of a webpage and learning more about a source from other online information.



Image credit: "along the canal" by Kalense Kid is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)



Some of our lateral reading work

For past 4 years:

- Workshop offering: [Evaluating Online Sources: An Introduction to "Lateral Reading"](#)
- Tutorials:
 - [Evaluating Online Sources through Lateral Reading: An Introduction](#)
 - [Lateral Reading with Critical Source Analysis](#)
- Toolkit: Evaluating Online Sources: A Toolkit
<https://libguides.rowan.edu/EvaluatingOnlineSources>
- Preliminary research: https://rdw.rowan.edu/lib_scholarship/40/



Quick polls

- Type of library/institution
- Familiarity with lateral reading
- Teaching experience with lateral reading



Evaluation exercise 1

Please complete Evaluation Exercise 1 (AAP and ACP) on the Google Doc: go.rowan.edu/2023lnj (5 minutes)



Lateral reading explained

- Mike Caulfield- Lateral Reading in Action
Video: [Online verification skills](#) (3:13)



SIFT: Moves for web evaluation

The acronym SIFT helps to describe key strategies of lateral reading:

- **S**top. Pause.
- **I**nvestigate the source.
- **F**ind trusted coverage.
- **T**race claims, quotes, and media back to the original context.

Modified from Mike Caulfield's [SIFT \(Four Moves\)](#), which is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

For additional details on SIFT we have created an [Evaluating Online Sources guide](#)



Click restraint

- The practice of quickly scanning a search results page before deciding what links to click
- Video: [How to Find Better Information Online: Click Restraint](#) (Stanford History Education Group) (2:19)

Lessons Learned from Our Teaching



Challenges of lateral reading (slide 1 of 2)

- On the surface, LR looks quite simple. In reality, it often requires critical thinking, like deciding how to search, what search results to click on, and what to trust.
- One challenge is that students have often been taught ineffective strategies that they need to unlearn (e.g., focusing on surface features like web domain and professional appearance).



Challenges of lateral reading (slide 2 of 2)

- Some sources are easier to evaluate with LR than others.
 - Often more challenging: think tanks/advocacy groups that have certain agendas/perspective, and that may provide reliable information or not
 - Distinguishing between evaluating claims and evaluating publication sources
- Motivation/agenda is a particularly useful evaluation criterion for these sources.

More Practice



Evaluation exercise 2

Please complete Evaluation Exercise 2 (minimumwage.com) on the Google Doc: go.rowan.edu/2023llnj (4 minutes)



Final reflection

Please complete the Final Reflection on the Google Doc:
go.rowan.edu/2023llnj

Research Findings on Our Tutorial



Our study on the effectiveness of a lateral reading tutorial (slide 1 of 2)

- Study demographics: 97 undergraduate students at two research universities across disciplines (six courses)
- Students' use of lateral reading more than doubled (21.6% to 52.5%, +30.9%).



Our study on the effectiveness of a lateral reading tutorial (slide 2 of 2)

- Both at the start and at the end of the tutorial, roughly 80% of those who used lateral reading correctly identified a questionable source as such.
- Students' abilities to correctly identify a source as lacking credibility modestly increased (+7.2%). This increase reflects the subset of students who did LR.
- Many students who were introduced to LR quickly adopted and effectively used these strategies. Other students appeared to need more exposure and practice in order to effectively use LR. These students may need more time to unlearn the more traditional and less effective evaluation strategies that they have used in the past.

For more details, please see: https://rdw.rowan.edu/lib_scholarship/40/



Teaching resources

Baer, Andrea, and Daniel G. Kipnis. 2023. “Diving Below the Surface: A Layered Approach to Teaching Online Source Evaluation through Lateral and Critical Reading.” In Teaching Critical Reading Skills, Volume 2: Strategies for Academic Librarians, edited by Hannah Gascho Rempel and Rachel Hamelers, 275–89. Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries. https://rdw.rowan.edu/lib_scholarship/39/.

Baer, Andrea, and Daniel G. Kipnis. “Evaluating Online Sources through Lateral Reading: An Introduction.” Tutorial. Accessed February 16, 2023. <https://libguides.rowan.edu/tutorial-evaluatingonlinesources1>.

Baer, Andrea, and Daniel G. Kipnis. “Evaluating Online Sources: A Toolkit.” <https://libguides.rowan.edu/EvaluatingOnlineSources>

Caulfield, Michael Arthur. 2017. Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers. Pressbooks. <https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/>.

[Civic Online Reasoning](#). Stanford History Education Group.

[How to Find Better Information Online: Click Restraint](#). Stanford History Education Group.



Discussion and questions and answers

Slides available online:

https://rdw.rowan.edu/lib_scholarship/47/