Distance Students and Online Research:

PROMOTING INFORMATION LITERACY THROUGH MEDIA LITERACY

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The Problem

Today's college students are dependent on the Web for research needs, yet lacking critical information literacy skills. Distance students are more dependent on online resources, and more likely to utilize generic search engines than library databases, therefore in critical need of information literacy skills.

Research Question:

How can educators best promote the development and practice of information literacy for distance students:

Potential Solution

Multi-literacies required for quality information seeking in the 21st century?

- Information Literacy—includes the ability to recognize when information is needed, to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (ALA, 1989).
- Traditional focus—library use and instruction
- Media Literacy—the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.
- It seems likely that media literacy is critical to information literacy in that a large proportion of our information comes from media sources
- Digital Literacy—the ability to search for and locate online information
- It seems likely that digital literacy is critical to information literacy in that a large proportion of our information comes from online sources

Hypotheses & Results

\[ H_1: \text{Media skepticism will positively associate with information literacy.} \]
\[ H_2: \text{Awareness of media effects will positively associate with information literacy} \]
\[ H_3: \text{Greater online access will positively associate with information literacy} \]
\[ H_4: \text{Greater access will positively associate with greater Internet self-efficacy} \]
\[ H_5: \text{Greater self-efficacy toward online information seeking will positively associate with information literacy.} \]

Sample population:

- Upperclassmen 88.2%
- Caucasian 84.3%
- Female 77.5%
- Mean age 36
- Percent of time online spent searching for information, range 0 - 100%; mean 40.6%.

Method:

online survey
- 2281 e-mail solicitations to WSU Online students
- 136 non deliverable
- 363 completes (15%)

Constructs:

IV
- Media Literacy
  - Understanding persuasive intent (skepticism for advertising): 7 item scale α=.94
  - eg., Advertising is truth well told
  - Obermiller and Spagenberg, 1998; 2000; Obermiller, Spagenberg and MacLachlan, 2005
  - Media awareness: 5 item scale α=.66
  - Media depictions influence an individual’s perception of reality
- Digital Literacy—familiarity with technology related terms
  - eg., mashup, malware, phishing
- Self Efficacy for Information seeking: 5 item scale α=.91
  - eg., I am certain I can find information online that I trust

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- Information literacy: 8 item scale α=.85
  - eg., Indicate the extent to which you actively considered the importance of each of the following in evaluating the quality of information on a Web site...whether the author of the information is identifiable...
  - Escoffery, Miner, and Adame, 2005; Neely, 2002

Conclusions

1. Significant positive relationships were found between:
   a. media awareness and information literacy,
   b. access and information literacy and information efficacy,
   c. information efficacy and information literacy.
2. Findings suggest that development of media and digital literacy skills could positively impact both information literacy and information self efficacy.
3. Instructors, librarians, and instructional designers, can foster greater information literacy by including activities that develop media and digital literacy skills in online courses.

The more tools in the tool belt of those teaching and designing online courses and the greater number of disciplines taking on the responsibility of fostering information literacy, the sooner we will witness the development of an information literate citizenry.