How Do Students Engage with News?

--by Gavin Ferriby, University Librarian

The Fall elections and other recent events have continued to make engagement with public events and awareness vitally important to our future as a democracy. Several events have highlighted the dangers of fragmentary stories and deceptive or outright false reports.

*Project Information Literacy (PIL)* is a non-profit research center that studies students in this digital age, from secondary school through post-college adulthood. Their studies use mixed methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups, to explore questions about how young people find, use, evaluate, and communicate all kinds of information, including news. PIL is supported by an array of organizations including the MacArthur Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the Gutman Library at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). PIL provides “best in class” research.

The recent PIL report *How Students Engage With News* provides five key takeaways for educators about their own students’ actual media behavior. One of the best elements of all PIL research is the respect shown for students, who are (in fact) far from passive recipients of random entertainment, or simply lazy. The study shows how hard students work to make sense of news, to evaluate media accuracy and bias, and to get the whole story.

PIL research identified three primary questions:

1. How do students conceptualize news, and “keep up”?
2. How do students experience news when using social media?
3. How do students evaluate credibility and authority of content from both traditional media and “new” (social or aggregated) media?

The findings suggest that young news consumers’ media diet is multi-modal and multi-social. News comes from peers, teachers, and other older adults as much as from social media. Students often use several social media sources rather than relying on only one. Polarized social and political attitudes have made students suspicious of bias and spin. Five takeaways:

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 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.

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PIL provides several focused insights as well:

- Seven in 10 college students reported receiving news from professors in the past week, including more than 75% of those majoring in arts and humanities, while those majoring in STEM subjects were least likely to discuss news either in the classroom or elsewhere with faculty (despite numerous news stories directly related to STEM subjects).

- Between 2015 and 2018 the number of students who reported that they regularly followed political news doubled (43% to 89%). Students have become more skeptical of news accounts in social media since 2016.

- For the youngest students in the samples (this would include 1st and 2nd year undergraduates in 2018), Snapchat was a go-to source of news.

- Twitter users tended to share more sports news than users on other platforms, and the number of Twitter users sharing political news has crested or slightly fallen; content is shared from many of the same sites.

- Librarians are trusted frontline knowledge professionals, but only a small percentage of students received news through interactions with librarians. Those who had received full-semester instruction in information literacy were far more likely to engage critically with faculty, librarians, and multiple sources of news, both old media and new.

At Sacred Heart University, librarians report that databases such as *Newspaper Source Plus*, and *ProQuest US Major Dailies* are among the most frequently searched databases (via *QuickSearch*), and link statistics show that a large number of searches lead to news links.

The PIL report made six actionable recommendations for faculty, librarians, students, and administrators:

1. Teach “knowledge in action” skills early and often throughout education. The same skills, habits, and dispositions needed to practice information literacy well are needed with news. Many curricula should teach explicitly the “sociology of knowledge” of their disciplines (i.e., how is their knowledge produced, evaluated, used, and who benefits).

2. Integrate news discussions into the classroom. Like “writing across the curriculum,” a focus on “news across the curriculum” could help students to sort out media and reports and do so without imposing a political point of view (any more than does writing).

3. Reconsider how faculty and librarians teach evaluation of information. Engagement should be deeper than surface evaluation, such as “trust only .edu and .gov web sites.” Students are already building evaluative skills on their own. They need help.

4. Bring the value of context back to news coverage. Including as complete a story as possible can help news writers and readers avoid bias as news travels from one media platform to another. Key questions are “What is the context of this information and is this the whole story?”

5. Journalists and writers need to continue embracing new forms of storytelling and new audience engagement strategies. Some audiences prefer highly visual news, which can enhance viewer engagement but risk losing nuance and context. This is especially the case when news covers ethnic groups and cultural identities labelled as minority. Students need to learn how to engage the emotional power of visual stories, as well as the risks and benefits such stories can produce.

6. Everyone in higher education needs to pressure social media companies to do much more to empower young news consumers. Social media platforms need to do much more to support analytical thinking and reasoning about news. Algorithms need to be carefully adjusted and considered to avoid driving readers and viewers to ever more extreme points of view, especially regarding “hot button” issues and groups. Advertising needs to become far more aware of social and cultural
Originally, my involvement with predatory journals began when several SHU faculty contacted the library to verify if the journal they were considering was a scholarly, peer-reviewed publication. My fellow librarians and I researched each individual journal title submitted to us in order to determine its legitimacy. One of the journals I was investigating was so close that I almost told the faculty it was okay. Then something caught my eye. The title was listed as a peer-reviewed journal in one of the EBSCOhost databases. They had ceased publishing articles from that journal in the early 2000's. That’s not unusual as some publishers pull their publications from database companies. Except that I couldn’t find this title indexed anywhere else. That is unusual. So I went to their website. It was pretty good except for the section to authors describing how to submit articles. There was a fee. Again, with Open Access journals asking authors to help defray the cost of publishing, that’s not totally unusual. But the claim of peer-review didn’t match with the speed of publication, promising to publish articles online within two weeks of receipt/review. No legitimate peer-review takes less than two weeks. It turned out that the particular journal had ceased publication altogether in the early 2000s. The title was being reused by another publisher. One located in India.

My interest in predatory journals led me to dig more deeply into the topic. There is a LOT of information out there!

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number one source of information about predatory journals tracked back to Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado Denver. He had created a blog with a list of predatory journals. I won’t get into great detail about it, but he no longer maintains this list. The result is that academics are basically “on their own” to determine if a journal is predatory or not. Meaning that more academic librarians are becoming involved. These publishers’ tactics are improving and the deception is getting harder to discover. This led me to search a community site belonging to Springshare where all types of libraries “share” research guides on various topics. A number of guides existed on the topic of predatory publishing. I went through most of them and found that the best for my purposes was a guide published by Ruth Beuter, a librarian at Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library at George Washington University. Since we are part of the Springshare Community, I was able to “borrow” the guide and edit it to fit the needs of faculty at Sacred Heart University.

In that process, I did additional research into the topic. Since the early 2000’s when predatory journals emerged in greater numbers, the problem has expanded greatly. Almost every academic discipline has written articles, editorials, blogs and held workshops on this issue. The publishers of these journals have even continued the problem by holding conferences where presenters are invited, but have to pay to present. Often, the conference claims sponsorship by well-known organizations who actually have no idea that their names are being used.

Others have tried to step in and “replace” Beall’s List. Cabell’s came out with a subscription product whitelist/blacklist of journal titles. None of them are perfect. Each title still requires investigation to determine its legitimacy. We currently have access to Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities for Business and are in the process of subscribing to their Education Directory and Blacklist.

I don’t see an end to this problem in the near future. Academics continue to research, write about their research, and share with others in the academic community. The traditional way to do this is through scholarly, peer-reviewed publications or conferences. As long as this is the process, predatory publishers will try to take advantage of it.

For further information on predatory publishing, see this guide: https://library.sacredheart.edu/PredatoryPublishing
This past May, the library offered its first ever SHU Library Institute. This two-day event was a joint effort, entailing participation from the entire library staff. The goal of the Institute is to help faculty embed information literacy in their courses and assignments. We accomplished this with many and diverse types of activities and assignment clinics allowing faculty to engage with each other and the library staff. The benefit to the faculty is that the work is very specifically tailored to their assignments and in some cases a specific course. Here is some of the feedback that we received:

“This institute was successful with great conversation, ideas, and resources (and gift bags!).”

“The impressive resources SHU offers to allow us as instructors to encourage students to become better researchers/writers. I also loved the activities we did during the two days including "The World Cafe" and "Round Robin" as we were able to discuss crucial points to help initiate meaningful discussions with the students. I think one of the most memorable discussions we had on authority and how we use it for our own research.”

“So many new ideas were exchanged during the library presentations that I am still going over my notes. However, just as valuable as the thought-filled presentations were the off the cuff conversations with other faculty members. I learned about websites that I never knew existed as well as other methodology most useful in teaching.”

The Institute was well-received and we hope to offer it again next May.

Assessment: What we have learned so far

The library’s Assessment Committee has shifted towards smaller assessment projects to start building a more robust culture of assessment. A subcommittee formed to focus on First Year Seminar instruction. Zach Claybaugh, OER and Digital Learning Librarian, is invited to teach in nearly all sections of FYS. While he has been able to incorporate formative assessment techniques to check in with students during instruction, he, along with the rest of the staff, wanted to see the bigger picture of student learning. Over the semester break 2017-18, Zach, Ula Lechtenberg, and Dan Fitzroy met to develop a new common lesson plan for a basic introduction to library research at the college level. Using inspiration from professional literature, and personal experiences teaching, the new lesson included a Google Form that would capture some data about student understanding of database searching. At the end of the Spring semester, the subcommittee met to look over the collected data.

One of the biggest issues we saw was that students easily misidentified source types. For example, they would call something a book when it was a journal article, or they would say a book review was a journal article. This helped us to redevelop the common lesson plan for the 2018-2019 academic year. The lesson now involves a hands-on activity where students are asked to identify materials. They are presented with physical copies of an edited book, journal article, book review, even Wikipedia articles and are asked to match them to their type. This lesson has been successful in engaging students and helping them realize that materials and resources are different even though they might get them via the same digital means.

While the lesson has been successful in this way, we have struggled to get the same amount of data to learn more about student learning. The subcommittee will meet over the semester break to discuss adjustments that can be made to remedy that issue.
Sacred Heart University continues to explore low-cost/no-cost course materials for classes. Naturally, this has led to a focus on open textbooks (open educational resources and open-access publications), in lieu of commercial textbooks. Over the past three years, Sacred Heart University Library has teamed with the Office of the Provost, the Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching (CEIT), and faculty from across campus to raise awareness of the open education movement and present instructors and departments with open options for their classes. Open textbooks are presently used in a number courses from campus units like Math, History, and the School of Computer Science & Engineering. In addition to open textbooks, our new OER Faculty Fellow, Prof. Frank Robinson is busy promoting open pedagogical practices that can increase student engagement with course content and enhance student learning.

For the remainder of the fall and the upcoming spring semester, the SHU Library, CEIT, and Prof. Robinson are focusing our work on meeting with departments to present the case for open materials and open pedagogical practices. If you are interested in having a short OER presentation at an upcoming department meeting, please contact Educational Technologist Colette Rossignol at rossignolc@sacredheart.edu. If you are interested in seeing what open materials are available for your classes, feel free to contact OER & Digital Learning Librarian Zach Claybaugh to set up a consultation at claybaughz@sacredheart.edu.

To engage library users, library staff pose a new question every week on a whiteboard near the library’s entrance. Sometimes the questions are serious and sometimes just for fun: If time travel were possible, when/where would you go? (“Dinosaurs...is that even a question?”) What social media accounts do you have and how would you like to hear from the library? (Instagram wins out in both cases). Every week we get a glimpse into the minds of the SHU community, which in turn can help us improve our services. One week, for example, we asked, “what’s one thing you wish the library had?” and one of the most popular answers was “whiteboards for the study rooms.” With that information, we ordered some whiteboards and put them in the study rooms for students to use. By doing this Question board, the library has learned that the SHU community is funny, snarky, a little stressed and willing to engage in a little bit of fun.

Growth continues to be strong in SHU’s online Master’s in Nursing, with students enrolling from not only across the northeast, but across the US, and even overseas. For the library specifically, this has meant increasingly more students in need of instruction for the program’s core research class, NU 602, Evidence Based Practice for Quality Care, which requires a research consultation with a librarian.
Formerly this demand was met with mainly one-on-one phone calls. However, the health sciences librarian, Geoffrey Staysniak, has recently switched to a larger scale webinar-based model using WebEx conferencing software, and so far the results have been promising. Not only can multiple students speak to a librarian at the same time, but WebEx’s screen-sharing capabilities allows for a fuller learning experiences with live demonstrations of major library tools and helpful research strategies. Also, thanks to the ability to record webinars, students who are unable to make a scheduled session only need to let their librarian know, and with just one link for a prior session they are able to have a learning experience just as rich as their classmates.

**STAFF NEWS**

The Library said farewell and Godspeed to Nancy Delvecchio in April. Nancy served as Collection Development, a.k.a Resource Development Librarian since 2002, and retired to Tidewater Virginia. Library staff and guests wished her well at a celebration before her departure.

The Library also said farewell to Kara Turman, who began a new position in Human Resources at Yale School of Medicine in August. Kara served as User Services assistant for exactly ten years, since August 2008. We wish her well in her new position.

The Library welcomed Sharaya Smith as User Services Assistant in October. Sharaya has long experience at Bridgeport Public Library, and has served in the U.S. Air Force. She has already brought new energy and a real spark to our user services. Welcome, Sharaya!

The Library also welcomed Susan Luchars as a full-time member of our team, as Resource Development and Assessment Librarian, in November. Susan has previously served as part-time Evening & Weekend Reference Librarian. Her other experience includes leadership of a team with the digitization project at the Barnum Museum, and service as part-time reference and instructional librarian at Fairfield University Library. Welcome (again), Susan!

The Library thanks Kelly Shand for her excellent work as a volunteer with the Library Archives, and with the Gloria Naylor Archive in particular. Kelly will take up a new position with a library service in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. She is trained in museum studies, and the whole staff has deeply appreciated her organizational skill and dedication to the continuing organization of the archives.

**BRAIN TEASERS**

1) What has a mouth, but can not eat; moves, but has no legs; and has a bank, but can not put money in it?
2) What 5-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
3) Can you think of a common word that contains double C, double S, and double L?

Answers on page 10
Below is a list of books the library staff have recently read. Each book has a 1 to 5 star rating based on how they enjoyed the book.

**Gavin Ferriby:**
*These Truths: A History of the United States* by Jill Lepore ★★★★★

**Dan Fitzroy:**
*Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel* by John Guy ★★★★★

**Sharaya Smith:**
*The Pillars of the Earth*, by Ken Follett ★★★★★

**Libby Knapik:**
*The Immortalists*, by Chloe Benjamin ★★★

**Deana Santoro-Dillon:**
*The Death of Mrs. Westaway*, by Ruth Ware ★★★★

**Zach Claybaugh:**
*American Ulysses: The Life of Ulysses S. Grant* by Ronald C. White ★★★★★

**Beverly Lysobey:**
*The Witch Elm: a novel* by Tana French ★★★★

**Renata Cioffi**
*Origin* by Dan Brown ★★★★

*Funeral Games: The Combat of Alexander’s Heirs* a novel by Mary Renault ★★★★★

*Drums of Autumn* by Diana Gabaldon (Outlander series, book 4) ★★★★★

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*Housing Inequality Can Be Both Cause and Effect Of Poverty In Wealthy CT*, by Clarice Silber published Oct. 16, 2018 in the CT Mirror ★★★★
The University Library hosts a small rotating collection of books oriented towards popular reading (meaning: things you don’t have to read for class or teaching).

Here are some titles:

**Popular Reading: Cold Weather Friends**

- The President is Missing by Bill Clinton and James Patterson
- The Rock, The Road and The Rabbi by Kathi Lee Gifford
- The Tatooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris
- Ready Player One by Ernest Cline
- The Death of Mrs. Westaway by Ruth Ware
- The Bakers Secret: A Novel by Stephen P. Kiernan

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**Staff Book Review**

---by Gavin Ferriby, University Librarian


The saying “education should be run like a business” has led to many attempts to improve education (whether public K-12 or higher) through applying the ideologies and procedures of the marketplace. John Fisher (Gap and Oakland A’s), John Paulson (hedge fund), Michael Milken (investing), Chris Whittle, Rupert Murdoch, Mark Zuckerberg, and others have spent billions and failed consistently. Why? Their failures to see distinctive aspects of those who “supply” educational services, those who “demand” them, the role of government support and regulation, and what “efficiency” have led to incorrect diagnoses, business plans, and evaluations: the road to disaster has been paved with good intentions. Both philanthropists and investors have sunk time and money into dubious schemes. Doing well and doing good is not always the same thing; bankers bear gifts with strings; the education sector has a distinctive structure, and realistic execution of ideas often matters more than motivation principles. Content is not king, but it is really expensive to develop. Ultimately all educational ventures, like politics, are local: what works in one place may not work in another. The “business” of education requires humility, flexibility, and continuity more than bravado and intelligence. These business failures may have bred the view that educational providers are incorrigible and beholden to agendas (“liberal” or otherwise). For both educators and investors, learning from failure is painful, difficult, and often lacks clear resolution and “portability.” As in classrooms, learning from failure is a learning strategy, and refusal to admit failure is the clearest path to repeating it.

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**Ryan Matura Library Book Club**

The Ryan Matura Library Book Club has been convening four times a year since 2013. Staff, students, and faculty are always welcome to participate.

The Club meets once in the fall semester and twice in the spring semester. The discussion for the current book will be held on January 9 at 12:00 PM in the Library Café. Please email Renata Cioffi at cioffim@sacredheart.edu if you have any questions or would like to attend.

The Group is currently reading *Before We Were Yours*: A Novel, by Lisa Wingate (The book is available for check out at the library).
Ryan Matura Library Upcoming Events

LIBRARY BOOK CLUB
January 9, 2019
Before We Were Yours: A Novel, by Lisa Wingate—Book Club Meeting for at 12:00 PM in the Library Café

Brain Teasers Answers:
1) River
2) Short
3) Unsuccessfully

Fall 2018 Library Statistics @ a Glance

1) Number of EBook Full-Text Retrievals: 10,533
2) Number of Journal Full-Text Retrievals: 174,384
3) Number of Database Searches from July - December 2018: 554,814
4) Number of Reference Desk Activity: 1,783
5) Number of Times Study Rooms Booked: 1,957

Usability Testing
--by Jeff Orrico, Director of Digital Library Services

Usability Testing (UT) can be a low-cost, high-impact approach to quickly improve library services. With the use of Webex as our recording software, and the help of the library staff as both test takers and observers, we conducted our first round of usability testing in November with the intended outcome of improving the library’s homepage. The feedback was quite revealing, encouraging us to take immediate action on identified problem areas. In future UT sessions, we plan to administer the tests to SHU faculty and students. If you are interested in getting involved and helping us improve library services, please email Jeff Orrico orricoj@sacredheart.edu.

New Book Display

NEW BOOKS: Check out the changing display of new books on the first floor of the Library.