

8. Choosing Sources

If your students are completing an assignment that requires a variety of different source types, and/or they need guidance on choosing appropriate sources, refer to:

- Video: Primary and Secondary Research
- Video: Types of Sources
- Video: Choosing a database
- Video: Evaluating Sources

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Source of Information

Ask the students how they handle gossip. Do they question, out loud or silently, the source of the information, the biases, etc.? This is a good place to have students explore their own personal biases and how they factor into evaluation of information while offering a real-world application of IL skills and social ethics.

Why/How are Information Literacy Skills Important in the Workplace?

Have students discuss ways in which IL skills could apply to their ideal jobs after graduation. Technology skills also factor into this discussion.

Discussion options: Develop a humorous list of made up symptoms and have the students discuss IL skills as a process of discovery. If they have a set of symptoms, what is their information need? Where can they go for information? Where should they go for information? Are some sources of information better than others? Why? Are some sources gray—not necessarily wrong or right? How do they evaluate the information they find? How would they evaluate their doctor's diagnosis? Are there ethical implications of the information they've discovered? Should they use the newfound information to diagnose others with similar symptoms?

ACTIVITIES

Types of Sources

Have students compare either two primary sources about the same event (Civil War diaries or letters, for example), or a primary and a secondary source about the same event. How did the student determine if each piece was a primary or a secondary source? How do the pieces differ? What additional research questions does the student have after reading the pieces?

Government Information Scavenger Hunt

Students find government websites for a health statistic, a labor statistic, the text of a new law, a map used for environmental studies, tax help, a government-funded scientific study, a description of a veteran benefit, name of a high-ranking official in the military, a database, or resources for teachers, and explain the most surprising thing they found while browsing a government website.

Explore two government websites from different levels of the same geographic area (e.g., a town and a county, a county and a province, a town and a state). Find two pieces of information that only are available at the lower level, two pieces that only are available at the higher level, and two pieces that are available at both levels.

Have students look up statistics/census data about their hometown. What information is available via government sources? Have them compare their hometown information to their current residence or school location.

Make students aware of really cool government sources by having them access and explore the USGS website (explore local earthquake information, for example) or NASA (Hubble). Have each student explore an interesting government source online and share their findings.

Primary and Secondary Sources

This may be a 1-minute writing assignment on common activity among the students (e.g., what students had for breakfast, or a campus or local event about which all the students are aware) describing their experiences. Share the pieces with partners/small groups/class and discuss how answers could be considered primary sources and converted into secondary sources.