

# How to ... Evaluate sources



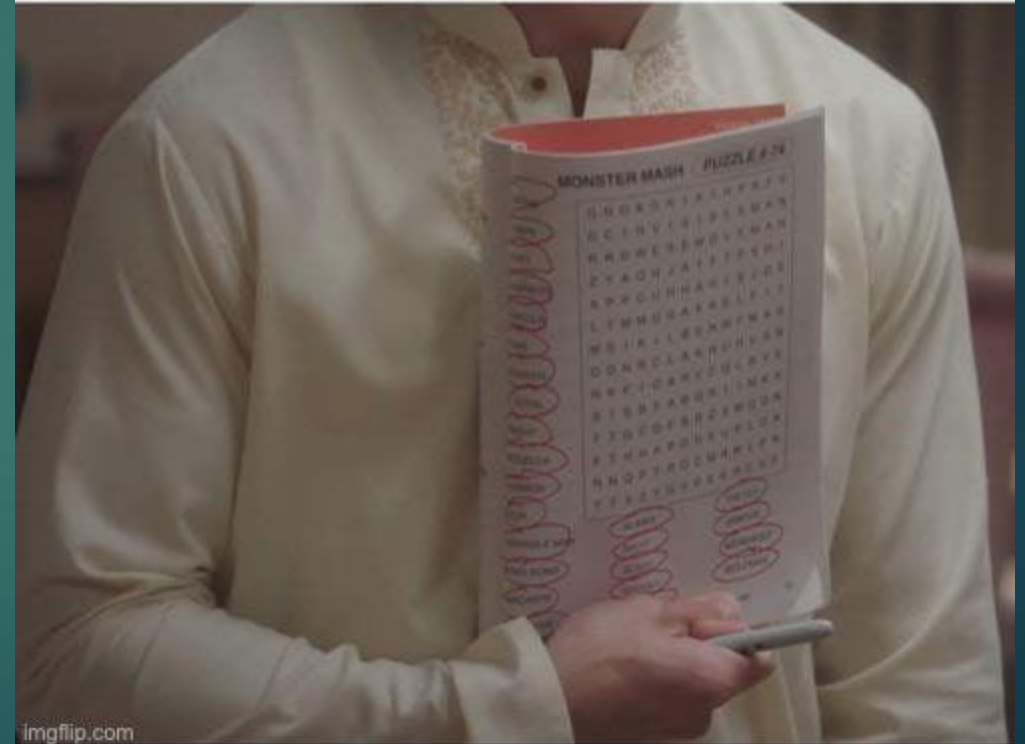
# Why we evaluate sources

- Validity of information
- Bias of information
- Making sure we aren't sharing misinformation
- Checking that the conclusions we have are accurate
- Making sure that the data supports the conclusions shared
  - Being careful to not fall under propaganda
  - Example: Climate change  
<https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2022/07/false-balance-reporting-climate-change-crisis/>
- In this day and age anyone can say anything on the internet, it's no longer that info is checked before shared
- There is a huge issue with AI giving information that is junk and inaccurate so we need to find where the info is coming from and make sure it's been checked by someone knowledgeable in that arena

# Why it's important to use good sources

- ▶ Making sure that the data has been analyzed properly by someone that knows what they are doing
- ▶ Making sure that the data and conclusions were verified by more than one person
- ▶ Making sure the source is reputable not just AI driven spam or a company trying to get money
  - For example: some companies publish information that is inaccurate just to sell their products
  - Some journals and publications are pay to play
- ▶ Making sure the work was done by experts in the field, not just random keyboard warriors

**What I picture when someone on social media says “I’ve done my research”**



# The difference between AI, Search Engines and research databases

## ▶ AI

- It's only as good as it's sources
- It has no checks or oversight, only can compile what was put in
- Doesn't understand "relevance" only can parrot back info

## ▶ Search engines

- Use an algorithm to decide which links to give you
- No checks on accuracy of links or info, you have to decide if you think the link/writer is trustworthy

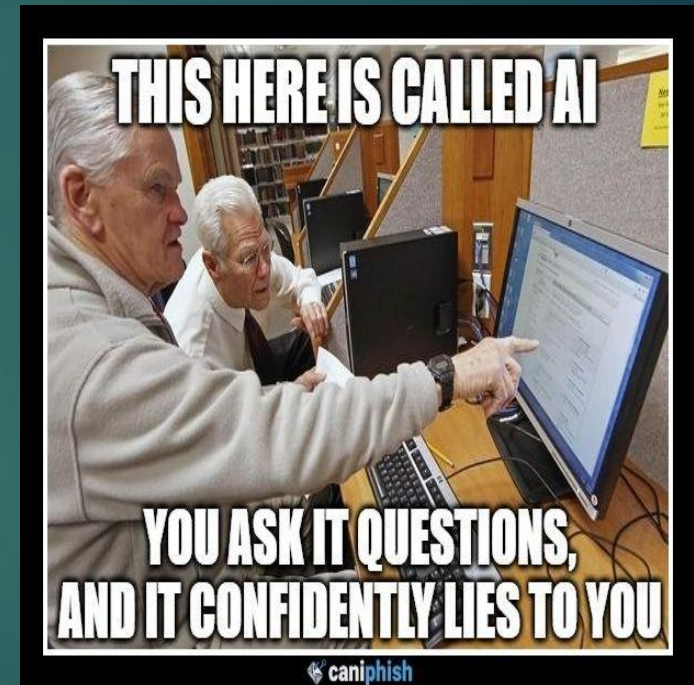
## ▶ Research databases

- Should only have articles that have been checked and peer reviewed
- Have to be careful of Pay to Play publications



# AI sources and how AI gets info

- ▶ AI technically doesn't learn, it's trained by looking through hundreds and thousands of pieces of information during the training phase
- ▶ Training is done by giving it info from anything the creators can get their hands on, not always reputable (such as images from social media and art from artists without asking)
- ▶ The results are just compilation of info and patterns recognized
- ▶ Example: Lawyer used AI for their arguments and cited fake court cases
  - <https://natlawreview.com/article/lawyers-sanctioned-citing-ai-generated-fake-cases>



# Search Engines and how they give links

- ▶ Search engines go through what's available on the internet and then adds it to its internal list and uses an algorithm to decide what it thinks are the most important
- ▶ Algorithms have changed over the years, from the simple keyword searches of the 90s, to the more tailored versions of today that take user behavior into account
- ▶ Search engines are also incorporating more and more AI into both the algorithms and what it shows on page 1, most people don't go past page 1
- ▶ SEO (Search Engine Optimization) affects the order things come up in, and it changes all the time, it's not based on accuracy of data mostly it's based on how many links link there, or how often people click the link for that search
- ▶ Search engine algorithms are what decide what's "relevant" or not, but that's not the same thing as accurate.
  - For example, rage bating

# Academic databases and news sources

- ▶ Should be peer reviewed and checked, not just anyone can post
- ▶ Community should have already decided if the source and data is reputable
- ▶ Knowing how to find the info that's relevant is more important, the knowledge has been checked, but it can be hard to find what you want

# The graph of news



<https://my.lwv.org/california/torrance-area/article/how-reliable-your-news-source-understanding-media-bias-2022>



# Bias and why it matters in sources

- ▶ Everyone has an agenda, some are more obvious than others
- ▶ Everyone has internal biases, even if we don't think we do, we do
- ▶ Bias can affect everything from where the information is shared to even the words used for sharing
  - An unfortunate example of this is the passive voice in journalism, and how journalists tend to talk about victims and children
- ▶ Bias is also an issue when it's a hot topic, because the larger the stakes the more people are inclined to lie or misconstrue results
- ▶ There are a lot of types of bias, such as confirmation bias, demographic bias, and distance bias
  - For example: <https://metro.co.uk/2016/07/07/well-done-millennials-youve-officially-ruined-handshakes-for-everyone-5991813/> Oh no! Millennials have killed the handshake!
  - <https://mashable.com/article/things-millennials-have-killed> Darn murderous Millennials

# How to evaluate sources

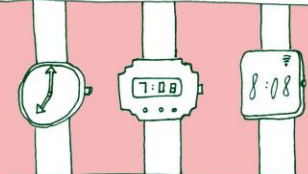
## ► CRAAP test

- C – Currency
- R – Relevance
- A – Authority
- A – Accuracy
- P – Purpose

Designed by Sarah Blakeslee and their team

<https://commons.emich.edu/loexquarterly/vol31/iss3/4/>

## GIVE INFORMATION THE CRAAP TEST! CHECK ITS VALIDITY WITH THESE QUESTIONS.



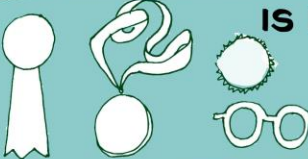
### IS IT **C**URRENT?

- Was it written recently enough to be accurate?
- Has it been revised or updated?
- Do the links work?



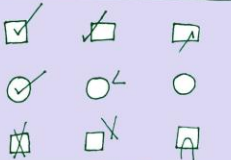
### IS IT **R**ELEVANT?

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Have you checked other sources to make sure yours is the most relevant to your topic?



### IS IT **A**UTHORITATIVE?

- Who wrote, published, or publicized it?
- What makes the author an expert?
- Are they backed by an institution (such as a university or institute)? If not, are they a primary source?



### IS IT **A**CCURATE?

- Is there supporting evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed by experts or factcheckers?
- Are there spelling or other errors?
- What are other experts saying about it?



### WHAT'S THE **P**URPOSE?

- Why was this information created? Is it to promote something? Sell ads? Drive votes?
- Is the purpose clear?
- What biases can you find? What are others saying about the author or source?
- What is your purpose and bias?

art by Lisa Nowlain

<https://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/craap.jpg>