Jill’s Journal Club Podcast Pilot

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Greetings Gentle Listener.

Welcome to the pilot podcast of Jill’s Journal Club. Please send me suggestions for a better name.

What’s the point of this podcast? I am always feeling really guilty about not keeping up with library research. So many articles are published that could inform my practice or that I just might find informative. How is a librarian to read even some of them when we are so busy all the time? Well, I’m going to help out by reading them for you and telling you about them. This way you can walk the dog or take the subway or drive to work or walk on the treadmill while hearing about work your colleagues are doing. Perhaps I’ll even attempt to interview some of the authors of these papers I’m sharing and then you’ll be able to enjoy a conversation rather than just me talking.

I’ve been a librarian for 25 years in higher education and science and the government. I’ve worked in some incredibly cool places including the College of St. Catherine in Minneapolis and the Space Telescope Science Institute home of the Hubble Space Telescope.

Even though I’ve worked for rocket scientists, I have a bigger challenge now -- I have the task like many of you to teach information literacy to first year college students.

The first bit of research I want to share with you is some longitudinal research that OCLC, Rutgers and the University of Florida have been doing and I think it is important for all of us to know about it. It’s called Researching Students Information Choices or RSIC for short.

The PI’s of this study wanted to know how students evaluate the resources they find when they’re searching for credible scientific information. So, they put individual students down in front of a simulated set of google results. The students were told to search on the topic of the Burmese Python, an invasive species, as if they were going to write a paper about it. Students from grade 4 to grad school were interviewed about what they thought about the various results and asked to rate them based on how citeable and how credible they were.

Now, one way of evaluating information is to determine the type of source the information comes from. Is it a journal article? A book? A newspaper? A blog? The RSIC study looked at how well students identify these wrappers or containers that identify genre.

It was found that students who are better able to identify the type of resource were also more engaged when it came to evaluating the credibility and citeability of the source.

There are some really interesting comments made by the students. For instance, one student decided to not trust a New York Times article on the Burmese Python problem because it started out by talking about the Garden of Eden.

This research hopes to inform how we teach information literacy.

After looking at a number of papers and blog posts and videos on this research I was left with some questions:

1. What’s the best way to teach about types of information without being too normative about it? I can think of blog posts that I thought were more credible than certain newspaper articles.
2. Is there a better way to identify these types of resources in library databases? I remember when databases like Academic Search Premier – that is databases that provide a single search box across multiple genres – we used to call this federated searching – came about. I really bothered me that the Journal of the American Medical Association looked the same as the Ladies Home Journal in its presentation to the user. Students just don’t have the visual and physical cues they once had to get to know resources.
3. Should we bring back some magazines and newspapers in the library so that students can be more acquainted with these visual cues?

Do you have any questions about this stuff? Do you teach document type or genres in your information literacy classes?

Drop me a line and I’ll share your responses at the beginning of the next episode.

And you can learn more about this research by visiting the yes you guessed it LibGuide about it at the University of Florida.

See you in the next episode. Until then this is Jill’s Journal Club Signing Off.