Judging Accuracy and Reliability of Information

EES101 Communicating Science teaching team/Library

2014 Learning & Teaching Conference
In a digitally rich world the ability to evaluate open education resources (OERs) for credibility is an essential but challenging skill.

Communicating Science academics and library staff collaborated in a teaching program designed to motivate and enable students to better assess science information freely available on the web.

Teaching program directly addresses the Graduate Learning Outcome of Digital Literacy.
Learning outcomes:

1. Be aware that information on the web comes with a range of accuracy and reliability

2. Develop criteria for assessing accuracy and reliability of information

3. Use these criteria to critically assess the accuracy and reliability of a range of web based information

4. Demonstrate skills in researching the information that integrate judgments of accuracy and reliability

5. Understand that judgements of accuracy and reliability are expert judgements and are improved by collaboration and deference to expertise

6. Communicate judgements of accuracy and reliability
The teaching program:

• **A class**: led by Library staff focussing on assessing the credibility of sources as an integral skill of Digital Literacy.

• **Three seminar activities** during which groups of students:
  - examine a website with scientific content for information which could not be verified directly from the site
  - develop a decision making process (decision tree or similar) to assess OERs for accuracy and reliability
  - apply this process to a different website.

• **The group assessment**: a ‘Media Watch’ style video communicating the analysis
Elements of the program leading to success:

• Time allowed for reinforcement of the judging accuracy and reliability of information concepts – class, seminar and assessment

• Creative and practical hands-on seminar task

• Development of critical thinking skills through seminar activity and discussions

• Relevance to students through linking to unit content

• Collaborative experience of working in a group providing peer support and review
Students are active

**Tutor:** “I think the activity, the decision tree was good in that they actually got to handle and interact with it, as opposed to listening to us reiterate a checkpoint, do this, do this, getting them more involved, and the creative was fun.”

**Student:** “It was more interesting doing it as a video and being able to prepare rather than coming into class and having to look at one and then do a test on it.”
Students collaborate

**Student**: “Yeah it was good to see other people also doing it, so you’re kinda like oh, that’s a good way to think about it, I didn’t think how to do it that way”

**Student**: “Probably find stuff you wouldn’t have found by yourself, somebody would find one thing…..then somebody come back……you’ve got a lot more content than you’d normally have”

**Student**: “I put a lot of work into it because I thought my peers would see it so I was scared into doing a good job”
Students develop skills

**Student:** “I’m doing second year now and that would have saved a bit of time off my research if I had of known what exactly I was looking for

**Student:** “the practice of doing it over and over it’s like burnt into our brains now, I can’t look at a website without looking for references or the author or stuff like that”

**Tutor:** “the students were really seeing that this had changed the way they were thinking about using the internet and their sources

Harris, L.n.d., Teacher talking to students in class, photograph, retrieved 24 November 2014, Science Photo Library database
Further applications of the activity by the Library:

- Engineering
- IT
- Communication and Creative Arts