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**Topic:**

*Social Media for the Real World: Preparing Students to Cleanse and Curate Their Online Presence*

**Description:**

As instruction librarians we are occasionally asked to teach students about dimensions of information literacy that fall beyond traditional library instruction. This presentation reflects on how the presenter responded to a request to provide undergraduate senior capstone students with a “social media cleanse” to prepare them for job and graduate school applications. Knowing little about the topic initially, the presenter learned through research that curating a beneficial online persona could be just as valuable to students as cleansing potentially harmful information. The session itself began with a social media self-inventory activity to increase students’ awareness of their online/social media presence. After this came a 20-minute interactive slide presentation of data and real-world examples highlighting the importance of cleansing and curating. Next, students learned basic Advanced Search techniques in Google and applied these to search for potentially beneficial and potentially harmful information about a student partner (or about themselves). The session ended by highlighting widely-used resources for online cleansing and curating, and by offering the librarian’s availability for personalized, one-on-one assistance with these tasks. While a session such as this is particularly useful for advanced undergraduates, it could be easily adapted for students of any background.

**Audience:**

Undergraduate senior capstone course in Sociology

**Objectives:**

- Students will be able to conduct Google advanced searches to investigate their individual online/social media presence
- Students will be able to consider their individual online/social media presence from a potential employer’s perspective
- Students will be able to access widely-used tools that can be used to cleanse and curate their online/social media presence

**Materials:**

- Teaching station with internet access and projector
- Computer-equipped classroom
- Slide presentation on social media and employers/admissions committees
- List of recommended resources for online cleansing and curating
- Social media self-inventory worksheet
- Google-your-partner (or yourself) activity worksheet

### Activity Overview:

- (2 minutes) Introduction
- (8 minutes) Social Media Self-Inventory worksheet/exercise
  - The librarian distributes a handout divided into six blank spaces. In each space, students are prompted to list a social media account, the type(s) of content they normally post there, 1-2 posts that they wouldn't want a potential employer or admissions committee to see, and 1-2 posts they would be happy for a potential employer or admissions committee to see. The librarian closes this activity by inviting students to share some examples of what they've written.
- (10 minutes) Why cleanse? Scary Stories about social media and employers
  - The librarian brings the class back together to view a librarian-created slide presentation that draws upon various sources to detail some situations in which social media use has proven disastrous to employees or students. Students ask questions throughout the presentation, and at certain points the librarian invites them to share brief stories about this from their own lives/people they know.
- (10 minutes) Why curate? Happy Stories about social media and employers
  - Now the slide presentation turns to detail situations in which social media use has proven beneficial to employees or students. Again, students ask questions throughout the presentation, and at certain points the librarian invites them to share brief stories about this from their own lives/people they know.
- (10 minutes) Brief Primer on Google Advanced Search Techniques
  - The librarian provides a hands-on tutorial in using Google Advanced Search. This covers techniques including searching for a phrase, finding results in various file and media formats, and searching with multiple keywords.
- (15 minutes) Pair activity: Google your partner (or yourself!)
  - Students spend 10 minutes Googling a partner and using a worksheet to take notes on what they find, imagining themselves to be an employer or admissions committee member. Students then take five minutes to share their results with their partners. The worksheet provides space to take note of both career-beneficial and career-harmful (or potentially harmful) search results and where and how these were found.
  - *Note: The librarian should discuss this activity with the faculty member prior to the session; if privacy concerns arise before or during the session, the student(s) can just as easily Google themselves instead of a fellow student partner.*
- (10 minutes) Resources for cleansing and curating
  - The librarian takes students on a guided hands-on tour of librarian-prepared links and instructional materials (including videos) showing how they can change privacy settings, delete posts or accounts, etc., on various popular social media apps (such as Facebook). The librarian similarly points students in the direction of websites such as LinkedIn and Google Sites that they can use to positively curate their online presence. Since there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to social media, the librarian provides resources that cover some of the most popular websites and apps that students can use to cleanse and curate.

- (8 minutes) Guided individual cleansing and curating
  - Students independently consult and explore the materials detailed in the previous section.
- (2 minutes) Session wrap-up
  - Librarian informs students that they can contact the librarian to schedule an appointment to meet for one-on-one guided instruction. This meeting could focus on changing the privacy and/or account settings in any particular app, and/or on creating a LinkedIn account or Google Sites personal webpage.

**Assessment:**

- The librarian circulates the room during the “Google your partner (or yourself)” activity, assessing students’ ability to perform effective advanced searches in Google and intervening to assist students as needed.
- The librarian will pose questions throughout the slide presentations on cleansing and curating to assess students’ understanding of potential employers’ perspectives.
- The librarian will monitor students while they independently consult and explore the recommended cleansing and curating resources, offering individual guidance as needed.

**ACRL Information Literacy Framework:**

- Information Has Value – Knowledge Practice 8
- Information Creation as a Process – Knowledge Practice 2