Lessons 7 & 8: Information, Media and Digital Literacies and Personal, Political and Professional Commitments

Key ideas:

(1) One can compare and contrast different literacies: information literacy, media literacy, and digital literacy
  a. Media literacy is: "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" (Media literacy defined, 2010).
  b. Information literacy is a "set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information" (Information literacy glossary, 2006).
  c. Digital literacy is "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills" (Heitin, 2016).
  d. These literacies are complementary, but media literacy and digital literacy can be employed to enhance information literacy.
(2) There are forms of information literacy using rational techniques for potentially open audiences
  a. determining the credibility of web sites and other online sources;
  b. learning how to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the information sought for information needs;
  c. learning the merits, defects, and effective use of search engines;
  d. promoting information literacy programs;
  e. learning about the structure of information sources to learn how to use them effectively;
  f. explaining the differences between knowledge, opinion, second hand-knowledge and the role of cognitive authorities;
  g. detecting logical fallacies;
  h. detecting violations of ethical principles.
(3) There are dimensions of information literacy when addressing closed audiences, those who live in an information filter bubble, or those in a closed propaganda loop. These considerations are less about solutions and more about why some partisans are shackled to their positions.
  a. Cults
  b. Addiction to tribal identity porn
  c. Filter bubbles or propaganda feedback loop
  d. Conspiracy theories
  e. Litigation
  f. The reinstitution of the fairness doctrine
  g. Socratic Techniques
(4) Personal, Professional, and Political (Public?) Commitments
  a. Pro-Truth Pledge The buck stops here becomes Disinformation stops here
  b. Promote the public good
  c. Profession of ignorance

In the arena of coping with disinformation, two kinds of literacies have been suggested, media literacy and information literacy, usually based on one's perspective, that of journalism and mass

communication or communication studies in the first case and that of library and information science in the second case. What are their relationship and their difference?

The National Association for Media Literacy Education defines media literacy as, "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication"; it "is the ability to encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages" (Media literacy defined, 2010). Like information literacy, it is interdisciplinary, and it is concerned with a critical approach to the content of messages. Unlike information literacy, it looks at the specific framework and medium of the message. Given a particular message, a critical analysis would involve evaluating the purpose and point of view of the message, how it was constructed, whether it was trying to promote bias, propaganda, profit or some other agenda. Media literacy also aims to educate about how to create and develop messages. The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) characterizes media literacy with 5 core concepts: "(1) all media messages are constructed; (2) media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules; (3) different people experience the same media message differently; (4) media have embedded values and points of view; and (5) most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power" (Media literacy: Five core concepts, n.d.). Media literacy can be seen as complementary to information literacy. To understand this claim, we must define information literacy.

The American Library Association (ALA) characterizes information literacy as the: "set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information," including "competencies in formulating research questions and in their [students'] ability to use information as well as an understanding of ethical and legal issues surrounding information" and skills "in critical thinking" (Information literacy glossary, 2006).

With information literacy training, information seekers would:

1. know when they have a need for information
2. identify information needed to address a given problem or issue
3. find needed information and evaluating the information
4. organize the information
5. use the information effectively to address the problem or issue at hand. (adapted from Presidential committee on information literacy: Final report, 2006)

The difference in information literacy and media literacy is the primary channel sought for information. A significant concern for information literacy is the use of formal information systems, such as libraries and other information supplying organizations, as a source for information. Media literacy looks at all channels through which information is communicated. Unfortunately, this distinction is not so clear because (1) information seeking is often not all that conscious (e.g., seeking content for confirmation bias); (2) information-seeking behavior is not restricted to formal information systems – in fact, the typical information seeker uses search engines first to satisfy their information needs: they are interested in "satisficing" their needs, in finding something that minimally fits their needs, not necessarily in finding the best content for their needs; (3) because of this default information-seeking posture, information literacy programs challenge information seekers to evaluate information from the web, whether from Google, social media or other information channels. When using non-formal information systems, the information seeker has to be trained to be wary of information content, and that is why media literacy is also useful. The context of the message in authorized information systems is pretty straightforward: to provide reliable sources of information (in general – libraries do not

regularly stock or promote "outright lies" except as an example of, e.g., hate literature), whether knowledge, opinion or orthodoxy. On the web, one has to be critical of the content, context, intent, structure, channel, and reliability of the message. One can argue that media literacy is an extension of information literacy, given that we are looking at it in the context of information-seeking behavior. The American Library Association has decided to consider media literacy training in public library programs in addition to information literacy (Media literacy @ your library, 2017). At one point, they addressed the issue of a "digital literacy" that combines media and information literacy: "Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills." (Heitin, 2016). The upshot is that both information and media literacy are essential in information seeking on the internet, but for this lesson, I will conceive a broader notion of information literacy to include media and digital literacies.

It seems useful to divide information literacy, including media literacy and digital literacy, into two aspects: (1) aspects of information literacy that are useful for potentially open audiences, such as students at all level, adult learners, and persons trying to understand the disinformation landscape; and (2) aspects of information literacy that attempt to address issues for closed audiences, such as die-hard conservatives, right-wing or left-wing groups that live within their filter bubble or those who live in a propaganda feedback loop.

There are many forms of information literacy that can be used to address the first group. The first is determining the credibility of web sites, especially those espousing fake news, by analyzing their currency, the authorship (if available), the quality of their links and supporting resources such as bibliographic references, and by checking with experts or with fact-checking sites, such as PolitiFact (http://www.politifact.com/), FactCheck (https://www.factcheck.org/) or Snopes (https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/). These sites, too, can reflect bias (though not necessarily an invalidating bias, one that it ignores or distorts the interpretation of the facts or evidence): https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/true-5-factchecking-websites/ (Eillis, 2019). For a comprehensive approach to web site evaluation, see http://www.citationmachine.net/mla/cite-a-newspaper/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=new+york+times&commit=Search+Newspapers (Citation Machine, n.d.). See also http://knight.org/vision https://www.cip.uw.edu/ Center for Informed Policy

Another information literacy skill is to learn how to effectively locate, evaluate, and use information sought for information needs in formal information systems such as library catalogs or online databases. While menu-driven systems are useful in searching online databases, there are unknown hazards if one is trying to do a comprehensive or precise search. For example, if one is looking in the research database, **ARTbibliographies Modern,** for a list of publications, by Yves-Alain Bois from 1980 to the present, one would typically enter the author name as given or interpreted in the search query: e.g., Bois, Yves-Alain.   However, it turns out that the database has six variations of the author's name: ("Bois, Yve Alain" OR "Bois, Yve-Alain" OR "Bois, Y -A" OR "Blois, Yve-Alain" OR "Bois, Y A" OR "Bois, Yves-Alain"). If one used only the name given to them (Bois, Yves-Alain), one would get a partial result because they would get results only for the one variation of author name that they used, not any from any of the other variations of author name. Many, if not all, users think that computers automatically map all variations of an author's name to a single entry, but it does not. A few systems which have what is called strong authority control, such as the Library of Congress, do link, for example, Jacqueline

Kennedy Onassis (their preferred entry) with Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Jackie Kennedy, Jackie Onassis, Jacqueline Bouvier, Jiagulin (Chinese variant) or Jackie, all of the forms of her name that an information seeker may use to find information by or about her. But these systems are few, and many information databases do not have this feature. This problem of a lack of authority control is not only true for **ARTbibliographies Modern** but many others. It is easy to fail to make a comprehensive search in databases such as these or miss a relevant entry because of not using the correct form of author name or not using all forms of the author name in the database. What magnifies this problem is that different database producers do different forms of indexing of author name and may have different entries for a particular author name so that when does multiple database searching (for which most libraries provide), especially database searching from different vendors, the results are severely flawed.

Furthermore, one can increase the precision of one's results from organized information collections, such as information databases, by learning about the indexing or subject terms used to construct the database. For controlled databases, the indexers try to be consistent in assigning subject term vocabulary to the intellectual content of articles in the database. If one uses the assigned term for a particular concept for a particular database, one can achieve a precise result, i.e., all articles that have been assigned a particular subject term will be clustered in the result. The result will be the consequence of an intellectual process undertaken by indexers and not a computer algorithm that does not understand the meaning of terms. Unfortunately, the assignment of subject terms varies among different databases and database producers, so that terms used in one database may not be used in another. Multidatabase searching using a single search term or phrase will produce flawed results, unless one takes the trouble to use the correct term, if it is available, for each of the databases being searched. There are many other issues to learn about databases and their construction that could enhance one's ability to search more effectively. However, it is important to note that if the information seeker just wants anything related to the search topic (i.e., anything about a particular concept or anything by a particular author), something that "satisfices" their information need (i.e., seek the minimum acceptable outcome or choose the first satisfactory option that one comes across), then rigor in using search systems, seeking what is called high precision (i.e., looking for many articles directly on target) or high recall (i.e., looking for many articles closely related to their information need) is not required. Google satisfices many information needs, which is why it is so popular. The unfortunate side effect of searching ease is failing to learn and not wanting to learn about how to achieve depth or breadth in one's searches.   There could be much better information to satisfy one's information need if the seeker understood how to do it. Unfortunately, many library search systems have been dumbed down to menu-driven systems, that not only hide the search issues but make it difficult to correct them.

Even with the ease of access to search engines, such engines are poorly used, and the nature of the results is poorly understood. The next important information literacy tool is learning the merits, defects, and effective use of search engines. The following are an outline of key points:

(1) The choice of vocabulary in a search engine is important. A search on *kidney neoplasms* will generally produce qualitatively better results than *kidney cancer* because the former is the accepted medical terminology, used in scientific studies, and is likely to occur in research-based web sites or resources. Having said that, *kidney cancer* sites may be more accessible to the layperson. The point is that the choice of search terms can greatly affect the nature and quality of the results.

(2) The use of search engine qualifiers will improve the quality of one's search, such as these Google techniques, Refine Web Searches

(https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/2466433?hl=en&ref_topic=3081620) or Advanced Search Techniques (https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/35890?hl=en&ref_topic=3081620). One can restrict searches to specific domains (e.g., .gov), to specific time frames, to particular words or phrases, to alternative words or phrases, to language, to file type, to image type, or to image color, or to exclude any of these, to mention a few options).

All search engines exhibit bias. There are 200 factors that affect how Google ranks its search results (https://backlinko.com/google-ranking-factors), but most factors do so only slightly (https://optinmonster.com/seo-ranking-factors/). For example, new sites often rank low, the most popular sites (built on the notion of link popularity – the more sites that link to a particular site are call link popular) are high on the output list. However, what is popular may not be the best. Sites that load slowly on mobile phones are ranked low but may have good information. Since 95% of searchers never go beyond the first page of search results, this is a serious problem because there may be more valuable resources below the splash page or pages (Santora, 2019).   See also Fowler, G. (2020, October 19). Perspective | How does Google's monopoly hurt you? Try these searches. Retrieved October 19, 2020, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/10/19/google-search-results-monopoly/?utm_campaign=wp_post_most

(3) Ideally, information seekers will learn how to learn by understanding how knowledge is organized and indexed and about pitfalls in failing to critically reflect on issues in information systems, such as library catalogs and information databases.

There are some other techniques for information literacy. Many libraries offer information literacy programs that provide hands-on training in the skills mentioned above. There are also many sites that offer guidance. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) suggests the following criteria for spotting fake news:

(1) consider the source – investigate the site, its mission and contact information;
(2) read beyond the given site or source, especially if the content is outrageous or intended to inflame;
(3) check the author to see what credentials they have or whether they are real;
(4) check the kind of supporting resources that are provided – follow the links and where they lead one to, to assess the credibility of supporting resources;
(5) check the date of the story – old news may be old and not currently relevant (though many sites offer perennial insight);
(6) determine whether the site is a spoof or satire, such as many stories that appear in The Onion (http://www.theonion.com/);
(7) check your own biases – no one is unbiased – make sure that you do not prey on your own biases, liberal or conservative; and finally
(8) ask the experts – consult a librarian or subject expert or check a fact-checking site, like Politifact (http://www.politifact.com/). (How to spot fake news, n.d.).

Many libraries post information about the CRAAP test, a guide for evaluating sources found on the internet. CRAAP is an acronym for evaluating such properties as Currency, Relevance, Authority,

Accuracy, and Purpose. An example can be found at
https://guides.library.illinoisstate.edu/evaluating/craap.

There are also strategies offered in the lessons above: helping others understand the varieties of
ignorance and false information on the web (lesson 2); the differences among knowledge, opinion,
second hand-knowledge in media use (lesson 3) and the role of cognitive authorities in validating
information or validating disinformation (lesson 6); the detection of logical fallacies (lesson 8) and the
detection of violations of ethical principles (lesson 9).

The more difficult problem is trying to develop Information literacy options for addressing closed
audiences, those who live in an information bubble or those in a closed propaganda loop.   Information
literacy here means not that we have a solution, but why a solution may not be forthcoming, i.e.,
understanding why the problem defies simple solutions. Several related phenomena may be involved.

One can start with cults. Janja Lalich, who has studied cults extensively, suggests that members of
"totalistic" cults—those that consider their ideology the one true path—share four key characteristics.
They

> 1) espouse an all-encompassing belief system; 2) exhibit excessive devotion to
> the leader; 3) avoid criticism of the group and its leader; and 4) feel disdain for
> non-members (Referenced in Jacobs, 2018).

She believes that followers of Trump may belong to a cult. Steven Hassan authored a book, *The Cult of
Trump* (2019), that obviously agrees (given the title of his book) that Trump is the leader of a cult
because of "his air of absolute confidence, his grandiosity, - 'only I can fix this' – his practice of sowing
fear and confusion, his demand for absolute loyalty, his tendency to lie and create alternative 'facts' and
realities, his shunning and belittling critics and ex-believers" (Hassan, 2019, Introduction). He compares
Trump to a line of cult leaders, such as Sun Myung Moon (of which the author was a former member), L.
Ron Hubbard, David Koresh, Lyndon LaRouche, and Jim Jones. The only strategy that seems to work is
being deprogrammed, physically removing the cult member from the cult context and challenging their
belief system, until they see the unreality of their cult existence.   This process was what happened to
Hassan and had stimulated his interest in the psychological processes that bring cult leaders into total
control. The problem with such methods, including legal constraints, is that the deprogramming must be
continuously enforced, else going back to the cult environment will devolve into a relapse.

This seductive context is related to another aspect of cult devotion: filter bubbles or the propaganda
feedback loops. In the current situation, many political partisans live in a filter bubble, where only select
sources enter the partisans' information stream, and others are ignored (as described in the lessons on
deception and self-deception and cognitive authorities). According to Yochai Benkler, they live in a
propaganda feedback loop, that not only contdigital literols the propaganda streams that are allowed
attention but also where these streams reinforce one another (Morrison, 2018) (anticipated in the
lessons of deception on self-deception and cognitive authorities). As we have seen, Fox News is an
illustration. As we noted earlier, at the beginning of the impeachment inquiry of President Trump in
October 2019, an American values survey by PRRI (Public Religion Research Institute) indicated that
while 37% Republicans overall asserted that almost nothing could dissuade them from approving of
Trump, over 50% of Republicans whose primary news source is Fox News approved of Trump. Those
Republicans whose primary news source was other than Fox News had only a 30% approval rating of the

President (Bump, 2019). According to Eric Wemple, the influence of Fox News cannot be underestimated:

>There's simply no outlet that dominates any other part of the political spectrum in the way Fox News dominates the right. With that dominance, Fox News has done great damage. It's not as if Fox News's influence extends to only however many millions may be viewing in prime time. There's what experts call a "media ecosystem" out there, where people take nonsense uttered on Fox News, then share it on Twitter, on Facebook, with their neighbor. Nonsense has a high pass around rate (Wemple, 2019).

The Trump cult seems to be somewhat different from typical cults. Cults revolve around a singular leader, and the channels of communication are strictly controlled by him/her. In Trump's case, the communication channels are not strictly controlled by him, but by those who want to support his regime (e.g., Fox News, Sinclair Broadcasting) in a sort of set of self-regulating and promoting propaganda machines. Their support may not be only to their leader, but the power, money, and control that they obtain by promoting his leadership and government. One former Fox News commentator, Tobin Smith, refers to the consumption of Fox News as addiction to "tribal identity porn," based on cultural and political resentment that "trigger feelings of hate, anger and outrage - the addictive trifecta of tribal partisan pornography" (Smith, 2019, p. 459).

Another troubling area of filter bubbles is social media sites that espouse various conspiracy theories. The problem is that when one attempts to offer evidence to counter a specific conspiracy theory, it is often met with a retort that the evidence provided is part of the conspiracy plot or higher conspiracy plot. All evidence is deemed by the conspiracy conceit as non-evidence or evidence of a more extensive conspiracy theory. People involved in such sites seem to be engaged in a version of Plato's imagining state of Cave dwellers mentioned in Lesson 3.

One solution to these problems is litigation, suing social media platforms for slander or infringements on privacy. However, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) of 1996, asserts that "No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider" (47 U.S.C. § 230). What this means is that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and other third-party online intermediaries that host or republish content are safeguarded from many laws that might hold them otherwise legally liable. There are exceptions for criminal action and intellectual property. As the slanderous and hateful speech proliferates on the internet, there might be some consideration for curtailing such broad freedom of speech. The irony is that the CDA was created to promote "decency." But it seems to have created the opposite in many instances, whereby Rebecca Tushnet refers to the online intermediaries, such as Facebook, as "power without responsibility" (Tushnet, 2008).

One possible solution to many of these problems is the reinstitution of a fairness doctrine. The original 1949 doctrine required broadcast license holders to present both sides of issues of public importance in a manner that was honest, equitable, and balanced.   It could be argued that this regulation should apply to all news sources, whether radio, television, or cable news and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and other social media sites. As in the original doctrine, it could be regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), but other Federal agencies could be involved, such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). One major problem would be that such regulations might apply to media in

the United States (unless incoming data streams from other countries were somehow regulated as well), but not internationally. Given the international character of the internet, there would be countries with widely permissive policies, as there are now. Perhaps regulations by the EU or the UN might mitigate some of these circumstances. These fixes would be difficult to apply in that most platforms are not likely to be regulated in the same way. In the current political environment, such regulations are unlikely to be enacted, and self-regulation does not appear to work very well, given that competitors of a given social media site type could provide unfettered restraints.

While there are no clear techniques for assuring that one can easily remove adherents from a sphere of disinformation, we might suggest that Socratic techniques might be tried. In the Platonic/Socratic view of true education, there are two aspects : (1) Socrates as a stingray, electric eel or gadfly (to which he is referred in various Platonic writings), in which he shocks or benumbs his interlocutors into an awareness of their ignorance, that what they thought they knew with assurance they did not. The purpose of this shock is to clear away what one unidentified commentator referred to as "the conceit of false knowledge." (The author remembers the phrase and its insight but cannot find the original Plato commentator). Ignorance and false knowledge, as in false opinions, are conceits, i.e., believing what we are owners of *the truth.*   And (2) Socrates as a midwife – using questions skillfully to have his interlocutors come to a self-realization of their true condition, hopefully with a willingness to be open to real learning (and no longer indulging in their confirmation biases). This second technique echoes John Swan's sentiments that "the simple but profound fact that the truth must be perceived by individuals, not dictated to them" (Swan & Peattie, 1989, p. 18).   The paradox is that those who listen to false cognitive authorities seem to believe that truth *can* be dictated to them. However, this process does not always succeed as many are secure in their state of ignorance or unwillingness to change: e.g., when a liberal is confronted by an unpleasant fact or consequences of his/her position, he or she retorts with such remarks, as "I'm entitled to my own opinion!" rather than working through the difficulties in supporting his or her position. There is heat but no enlightenment with a battle of opinions, however ill-founded or well-founded they are. It can only occur through a genuine dialogical process. We must admit that an interlocutor in a dialog may lack the wit to follow the logical conclusion of Socrates' questions or the questions of the leader in the dialogue. This inability is the case of Meno, the central character of Plato's *Meno*, who is left in a state of befuddlement when Socrates shows that his opinions about virtue, the topic of the dialog, lack any foundation (*Meno*, 71b-78e). The victim of false cognitive authorities, the Sophists, Meno was merely echoing the assertions of his teachers. He lacked the wit to supply a proper rationale for his definitions, no doubt because there were none. He is left with opinions, no doubt false opinions. At least he comes to know that he does not know, and the opinions that he parrots from his Sophist teachers do not hold water.

Appealing to Socratic techniques, if a Trump supporter tells you his vote for Trump "… was a wise decision … for working-class Americans who are tired of their jobs being taken by illegals" (Lafond, 2018), one can ask what illegals is he talking about and what jobs? One can point out that while is true that there are 7.5 million undocumented immigrants in US jobs, most of these jobs are not ones that most US citizens would want (e.g., farm laborer or chicken plant processor), admitting that such jobs depress good wages for such jobs (which is hardly a fault of the laborer, but an unwillingness of companies to pay decent wages for such work) (Olsen, 2019). It is also true that student immigrants have earned high degrees and stayed and have been hired for high-paying jobs in various businesses and educational institutions. That opportunity is also available to many Americans if they are willing to do

the work. If the Trump supporter is annoyed with such observations, he/she may follow with silence or with retorts to the effect that Trump has done other great things. Such an example illustrates the Socratic technique of benumbing. It also illustrates a case where the interlocutor is unwilling to change.

Rick Alan Ross of the Cult Education Institute suggests that if conversing with a Trump supporter, pick an emotionally charged issue, such as reproductive health rights, and explain that Trump supports defunding Planned Parenthood and holds outmoded opinions about women (Matthews, 2018). These observations might act as a benumbing moment, challenging the interlocuter into an awareness that her idol holds a position contrary to her beliefs. Ross suggests some other techniques. To sway a Trump supporter, one can start identifying persons that she respects, looking for people who have spoken in opposition to Trump. In this way, one can play the role of a midwife, by suggesting other high-profile figures or sources, that the interlocuter respects. Ross indicates that "the key to introducing more critical thinking is pointing out ambiguity and nuance, rather than challenging core beliefs directly" (Matthews, 2018).

Such reflections suggest possibilities for trying to open the close-mindedness of many political partisans. However, there are also personal, professional or political agendas to which one can commit.   One can commit to the Pro-Truth Pledge (https://www.protruthpledge.org), personally, politically and professionally, too, unless we are acting in a profession such as librarianship, in which the librarians are charged "to provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or (in the same way as committing to self-quarantining) removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." (Library Bill of Rights). However there is a bit of a tension to that commitment, for the Library Bill of Rights also states: "Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves," (Library Bill of Rights) because supporting untruths and websites full of disinformation generally are not regarded as places for enlightenment, except perhaps in a negative way—observing the nature of disinformation that purveyors want to flood the internet, much in the same way that a pro-white-supremacy book in a library collection would illustrate hate speech and varieties of misinformation or disinformation that support such a philosophy. If we take the Pro-Truth Pledge, we promise only to share verified truth as completely as possible, to honor truth (to acknowledge and defend it) and to encourage truth (to ask for lies to be retracted, to educate ourselves and others, and acknowledge genuine experts). It would help address and beat back the verbal pollution that exists in public sphere.

There is a final idea that we can learn from Socrates. If you recall many of Plato's dialogs, they start with Socrates' profession of ignorance. His interlocutor in a dialog, e.g., Meno in the *Meno,* brings up a topic to be discussed. Socrates' response is an enthusiastic willingness to learn because he professes that he has little or no knowledge of the topic at hand. His profession of ignorance has been referred to as ironic, because in the end, his knowledge of the topic, as 'limited' as it is professed to be, turns out to be the most informed. This profession of ignorance is not false. It is a reminder of Socrates to himself to stay open to learning, to consciously recognize our biases and particular history, and to avoid pitfalls that may hinder our real learning or our real understanding of our interlocutors and what they have to offer. It is to recognize that we are a community of learners trying to work for a common, public good, a purpose that often gets lost in partisan bickering.

Exercise suggestions will call on participants to consider the following questions:

(1) Can you locate two specific web sites and evaluate their credibility?

(2) Taking a specific research question, can you locate, evaluate, and use information effectively from one specific library or library database and one internet source (e.g., Google Scholar)?

(3) Can you create three searches on Google, where you use at least two of its advanced features for each search? See Google techniques, Refine Web Searches (https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/2466433?hl=en&ref_topic=3081620) or Advanced Search Techniques (https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/35890?hl=en&ref_topic=3081620). Can you explain the merits and defects of the results of your searches?

(4) Can you find out about and take Pro-Truth Pledge (https://www.protruthpledge.org/)?

(5) What techniques can you find other than those in the lesson whereby those involved in a political filter bubble or closed propaganda feedback loop can be effectively challenged in their assumptions (in the way of Socratic benumbing) or actually moved forward to begin to change their beliefs (in the way of Socratic midwifery).