

What Do You Meme? Pop Culture in the Information Literacy Classroom

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Lana Mariko Wood

Health Sciences and Scholarly Communication Librarian, California State University, East Bay

Stephanie Alexander

Social Sciences and Assessment Librarian, California State University, East Bay

Andrew Carlos

STEM and Web Services Librarian, California State University, East Bay

Abstract

Popular culture has been seen as a tool for making information literacy more relatable to students (Marshall, 2002; Detmering, 2010; Peterson, 2010; Steiner & Madden, 2010; Blackburn & Molidor, 2011; Springer & Yelinek, 2011; Moser, 2012; Stahura & Milanese, 2013; Tewell, 2014; Angell, 2016). However, when thinking about what popular culture items to bring into the classroom, instructors must take a critical look at the item beyond “is it funny,” or, “does it relate to my lesson.” Instead, instructors must ask themselves whose popular culture is being represented in these works, question their assumptions of universalism in humor, and critically look at whether pop culture actually helps further learning on a particular topic.

In this panel, the speakers will take a discerning look at different types of pop culture used in information literacy classrooms and discuss their usefulness, pitfalls, and engagement with undergraduate students. The first project discusses research on the use of satirical news stories in the information literacy classroom. The second project looks at implementing memes and gaming into the classroom as a way of demonstrating how to make research more understandable and encouraging students to bring their previous experiences and personalities into their work.

Panel Members: Lana Mariko Wood and Stephanie Alexander

Biographies

Lana Mariko Wood is Health Sciences and Scholarly Communication Librarian at California State University, East Bay. Her research interests include the intersections of scholarly communication and information literacy.

Stephanie Alexander serves as the Social Sciences and Assessment Librarian at California State University, East Bay. Her research interests include assessment and user engagement with libraries.

Contribution

Wood began the presentation by discussing CSUEB's student demographics and the required information literacy course (LIBY 1210) taken by all first-year undergraduate students.

Alexander discussed the literature review, which looked at four themes: humor in information literacy instruction, humor in college classrooms, use of satirical news sources, and biased message processing. Wood described the study design, which used a mixed-methods concurrent nested design, and involved four research instruments: a news interaction survey, individual video surveys, an end of quarter survey, and focus groups.

The study took place in academic year 2016-2017 in the two researchers' LIBY 1210 sections. Students were shown five satirical news clips from Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* and HBO's *Last Week Tonight* and responded to the three surveys. Some students also participated in the project's focus groups. Wood and Alexander found eight themes in the collected data, three of which were discussed in the panel: credibility and trustworthiness, impact of political orientation and bias, and social media as a news source. Wood and Alexander discussed their analysis of student responses to the clip with the most pronounced sarcasm, and found that less than one-third of students could see through the sarcasm to understand the point of the video. They also shared that overall students responded positively to the use of satirical news clips in the classroom.

Overall, Wood and Alexander found that the use of satirical news videos improves the instructional experience in the information literacy classroom; however, videos need to be discussed and contextualized to clarify confusion that comes with using satirical humor, and are best when they are relevant to the students' interests and experiences. Wood and Alexander are currently drafting an article titled "No News is Good News? Using Satirical News Video Clips in the Information Literacy Classroom" for submission later this year.

Panel Member: Andrew Carlos

Biography

Andrew Carlos is one of the STEM and Web Services Librarians at California State University, East Bay. He is the liaison for the Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science, Psychology,

and Earth and Environmental Sciences departments. His research interests include emerging technology, user experience, mobile technology, and library spaces.

Contribution

Carlos began his presentation by describing his guiding question: Can the use of games and other elements of popular culture improve a student's learning experience in the information literacy classroom? He then went over a very brief literature review, which covered the use of elements of popular culture in instruction, from departments outside of LIS to the use of popular culture within information literacy instruction. The literature review showed that students were engaged with the activities presented and developed appropriate skills, but did not necessarily learn anything about content.

Appendix 1

[Send copy of combined slides]