

The Evolution of Evaluation: Teaching Source Evaluation in a Transforming Information and Education Landscape

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Introduction

As an MLIS candidate at the University of Maryland (UMD), I tailored my program toward academic librarianship with a focus on undergraduate information literacy. In my roles as a Research & Teaching Fellow at UMD and a Research & Teaching Intern at Montgomery College (MC), a common challenge was teaching source evaluation in a rapidly changing information and educational environment. Current evolutions and trends impacting this include:

- The influx of available information and changing source types,¹
- Shortening attention spans and a growing preference for shortform content,² and
- An educational shift toward active student participation in their own learning.³

To effectively respond to these evolutions, I incorporated several new instructional changes across both roles from Fall 2025 – Spring 2026. This poster outlines three of these strategies for teaching source evaluation in 2026.

About the Programs

Research & Teaching Fellowship (UMD)

The Research & Teaching Fellowship (RTF) is a three-semester training program for MLIS students at UMD interested in academic instruction librarianship. Fellows provide introductory information literacy and research instruction to undergraduates in ENGL101.

Research & Teaching Internship (MC)

For my MLIS field study, I interned with the STEM Librarian at MC, the flagship public community college system of Montgomery County, MD. Through my field study, I supported a variety of tasks including creating and reviewing asynchronous learning tools, supporting an instructional assessment project, and providing student research consultations.

Strategies for Teaching Source Evaluation

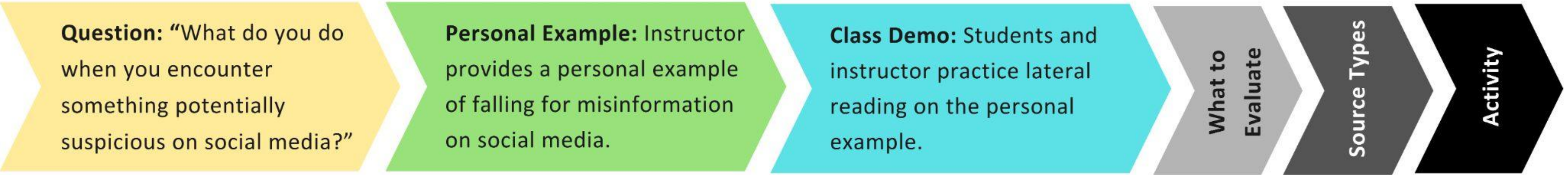
At UMD and MC, I planned and implemented the following strategies to change how I taught evaluating sources through live one-shot instruction sessions and asynchronous learning tools.

1. What Do You Do?: Reframing instruction with personal examples

Below is the flow which is typically used to teach source evaluation in ENGL101 one-shot sessions. In the standard lesson plan, instruction on source evaluation jumps straight into discussing research sources.



However, I found in my sessions that many students had done minimal or no research in the past and were unsure how to answer. I also hoped to better connect with students and present myself as a more relatable learner. Therefore, I adjusted my lesson flow to start by asking students about their social media behaviors, and to include examples of my own mistakes and learnings.



2. This or That?: Engaging students using a live scenario-based quiz activity

In my ENGL101 instruction, I aimed to better teach relevance or appropriateness, not just credibility, as a key component of source evaluation. To engage students in active learning, I created a five-question live quiz activity using Stingtao, a Kahoot-like platform. After each question, we would discuss as a class.

Sample Question: You're just starting your research paper on electric vehicles (EVs) and don't have a clear argument yet. Which source is more appropriate for your needs?

A. A government dataset on EV charging station locations in California

B. A Britannica reference source giving an overview of EVs

3. What's Trending?: Capturing attention through short-form instructional videos

In an effort to modernize instructional videos and better align with current trends, I created a three-minute vertical video on source types. Along with another shortform vertical video created by my MC supervisor on evaluating authority, this video was embedded into an Articulate tutorial on source evaluation. The videos were short and informal; featured dynamic, colorful, and fast-moving visuals; and included visual examples of digital source types and when to use them. Two screenshots from the video are shown here.



Discussion

Incorporating these three new strategies opened up opportunities to meet students where they are, engage them using active learning and dynamic content, and acknowledge that source types may not be as easily distinguishable to students as they were in the past. It was also an excellent exercise in thinking critically about student-centered instruction.

Assessing the effectiveness of each strategy would be the next step for this project. Several students did mention in post-instruction feedback surveys that they enjoyed the quiz activity, but having more assessment data would be informative. For instance, it is unclear in the literature whether creating short-form educational content is beneficial for learning or more of a hindrance.⁴

In the future, I would also like to consider new strategies to discuss evaluating AI sources.

Acknowledgements

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Over at MC, I want to thank my field study supervisor, Amy Trost. Amy's innovativeness, curiosity, and willingness to loop me into anything and everything opened up so many new insights and opportunities in librarianship for me.

References

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