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KAREN FOLEY: Hi, and welcome back to Student Connections. All right, so I am joined now from with Wendy and Nicola from the library. And you're going to tell us that things that we can read online maybe aren't very true.

WENDY That's correct. So I'd like to start with some of your responses to the question which we posted
CHALMERS: earlier. Have you believed something you read online, only to find out later it wasn't true? So some of the stories you believed was a story in the newspaper about airline passengers who were going to be shrunk to fit into smaller airplanes.

KAREN FOLEY: These are that people believed?

WENDY Yes, these are stories which people actually believed. And this person actually admitted they
CHALMERS: were slightly younger than they are now when they believed that story. Someone commented, I read that Freddie Mercury was not gay. Was gutted when he died of AIDS. And also, someone said, I believed the statement presented as fact, i.e. Jeremy Corbin will singlehandedly destroy England, until that newspaper's political agenda became clear.

So those were some of the stories. And there's also a few interesting comments. For example, I tend to believe a number of reputable sites. Answer depends on the context and type of material. My approach is to treat most web information with circumspection. And also, I don't generally believe anything I read online unless they can show references and proof.

So I think to sum up, generally there appears to be a level of scepticism about online information which takes into kind the source of the information, the type of the information, and whether the information can be verified.

KAREN FOLEY: So when we started running this session, I said, right, library. You come to so many of our events, and the students absolutely love knowing about it. Why did you decide that this was a good sort of topic? Why is this both social science and library-relevant?

NICOLA BEER: Well, I think as you can see from some of the stories that we just heard about, it can be really easy to be misled online. And it's quite difficult sometimes to know exactly what you can trust. And even when you hear back some of the stories afterwards, they sound hilarious, but it's so

easy to be misled. So we wanted really to showcase some of the pitfalls that you could fall into, both also give useful ways around how you can make sure that you don't fall into those traps. So that's what we're going to have a look at.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, brilliant.

WENDY CHALMERS: OK, so if you do have any questions throughout the session, please post them, and we will answer them throughout the session.

NICOLA BEER: And we've also got a little poll going on the website, and that should be appearing on your screens. It asks you, how much of what you read on the web do you believe is true? So if you could tell us what percentage you think is true, and we'll have a little look at the results later on.

KAREN FOLEY: And while you're answering that poll, I'd just like to look at times some of the interesting headlines we've seen. This is one about Chinese teens taking cabbages for walks to get over loneliness. And this was supported in several Western media outlets, including quotes from a teenager saying A cabbage is better than a dog. Now, this story was later debunked, I believe in the *Washington Post*, and it actually turned that to be an part of an art exhibition, performance art, in Beijing.

NICOLA BEER: So that's a bit of a silly one. But we picked this one just to illustrate that actually, more serious stories can actually be a bit misleading. So this one has got quite a sensational headline, "Blondes to die out in 200 years."

And when you actually read through the article, what we found was that although the headline purported this fact, that actually there was a quote further down from a reputable academic saying that, actually, that's not the case. And the research that was quoted wasn't actually really quoted at all. It mentioned it, but it didn't tell you anything about it. So this just really illustrates that it does pay to read the whole article, and just to make sure that you can follow up where the facts have come from.

WENDY CHALMERS: We have another example. "Dating scams add 27% increase in fraud." When you actually read beyond the headline, there's actually a quote from an O&S spokesman which says they're not sure if this comes from a different way the statistics are reported or if this is actually the case.

So the headline itself can be quite misleading. In this case, the article referred to a report. And as Nicola mentioned, if you're really interested in a topic, a good newspaper article will give the

reference to the report. And it's useful to follow up that report if you're really interested in that topic, rather than relying on the headlines.

KAREN FOLEY: So why is trusting things online, then, such an issue? I mean, clearly some of-- like you're saying, you need to read the whole article. Not everything is true. Some things are obviously trying to PR or spin things for a certain reason, or have a different political agenda, maybe. So what then-- what would you say?

WENDY

CHALMERS:

I think one of the issues is that there's more and more information that's freely available online. For example, Wikipedia is a very good example. It's a very popular source, and I use it myself. And it's a useful first point of interest, but I think you do have to be aware that anyone can contribute to Wikipedia. It's not necessarily the expert who writes the article which you might find in an academic source. And it's possibly the person who feels more strongly or has a stronger agenda, rather than the expert, who writes the article.

So there are issues, as I'm sure many of you are aware. Entries may be subject to vandalism, misinformation. At the same time, Wikipedia does have guidelines. Contributors are expected to write from a neutral point of view. They're supposed to provide references so they can verify the entries.

And there is supposed to be no opinion. It's supposed to be fact, substantiated by evidence. And if articles don't follow those guidelines, they can be removed.

NICOLA BEER:

Yeah, so there are actually plenty of positives to Wikipedia. So there's those guidelines, for a start. And there's also the fact that anybody can edit it, so it tends to be more up-to-date. So if something isn't quite correct, then someone who knows a bit more about the subject can jump in and make sure that it's fixed.

And there are a couple of hints and tips that you can follow when you're using Wikipedia. One that's really useful is that there's a Talk button at the top of the page. You can click on that, and that will allow you to read discussion by people that have read the page and people that have contributed to the page. And that kind of gives you an indication of how controversial the topic is, how likely it is to be true. So that's a really useful one to know about.

And you can also have a look at the View History tab. And that will tell you when it was last edited, so you can tell if it's really up-to-date.

KAREN FOLEY: And who's been editing it.

NICOLA BEER: Exactly.

KAREN FOLEY: I wonder what everyone thought at home. I hear that we got some feedback on our widgets, and I'd really like to see what people are saying about that. What percentage do you think of information is true online?

HJ: There seems to be a lot of scepticism at home on the chat. Carla and Catherine reckon it's only about 20% that we can trust online. That's a ballpark figure. Madeline is a bit more optimistic, saying 40% to 60%, which seems to be the general consensus. And we've been having discussions.

Gareth is talking about how a lot of news used to be opinionated. And when it comes across, it always comes across from a person, doesn't it? And we all have our thoughts and views about different things. And Laura doesn't believe anything the media print, because a lot of times they can just rush stories out for the big headlines, and then moments later, it seems to be corrected.

But on our wall, as well, we've just had a quick whup-whup for the library, because we all love the library, as well. But we always love the library, and we're not so sceptical about there. We know we can trust the library.

RACHEL: Yeah, a lot of students obviously understand that the library is a very good source for generating information, legitimate information, as well online. But we've got a lot of new students here today, and some of them are saying, you know, where do we even start? We don't even know how to utilise the library to sort of find legitimate sources. So is there any help available?

WENDY CHALMERS: Yes, if they find the library website, there's a section on help within the library website, which will take them to guides-- how to navigate the site, how to use the different sources. And there's also some online training sessions available. They're OU Live sessions, so students can sign up for those sessions. So there is a lot of help available, and there's also a library help desk, which students can contact at any point.

KAREN FOLEY: We've also got archives from the previous Student Connections Conference, as well as, like you say, lots of advice online. Because you two both-- I should have mentioned this at the start-- work in the physical library over the road, and we have lots of books in there. So whilst

OU's library is online and is one of the most huge wealths of material available online, there is a lot of help and support that you can get either through chat or text or online looking at various things, and OU Live, et cetera. So that's important to mention.

OK, so Wikipedia, then. We've talked about how that can be edited and how you can look at that. It is something-- I mean, when I'm teaching, so many students of mine will use Wikipedia. I personally think it's a really good thing to get a steer on a subject, like you say, a take on it. But should they be referencing it and acknowledging it? Or is it like a dirty secret that we should be hiding? What are your sorts of feelings on that, from an academic perspective? Because I know you do a lot of referencing and things as well.

WENDY

CHALMERS:

I believe you should use sources other than Wikipedia to reference. As you say, it is a good starting point. If you want to find other sources of information or you want to find a little bit about a topic, it is a good steer. It is a good starting point, but we wouldn't really recommend it as an academic source.

NICOLA BEER:

No. And actually, with Wikipedia, everything that's written in there should be cited and referenced anyway. So if you're using it as a starting point, then you can just go down to the references at the bottom, check that they seem OK, look at those, and then you can reference those in your assignment. So you shouldn't ever really need to reference Wikipedia.

KAREN FOLEY:

Excellent. Good point. And I guess that shows you have robust that information is, as well. If it's got lots of references in there, it should be based on some fact, shouldn't it?

NICOLA BEER:

Exactly. I mean, if you have to reference Wikipedia because it hasn't given a citation itself, then you need to think a little bit more carefully about whether that's really good information.

KAREN FOLEY:

Excellent. Now you've got a checklist, haven't you, for evaluating some of this.

WENDY

CHALMERS:

Yes. As there's so much material available online, we find it useful to apply checklists to help you assess the authenticity of the material. So one checklist is the "Who? Why? When?" checklist. And that's quite useful to evaluate-- for quick evaluation of websites. Who? Why? When?

So for example, with this website-- which actually has quite a long title-- "The Agreement On the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Water Birds." So we can see the "who" immediately on this website. The "who" to set up by United Nations Environmental Protection

programme. And so that's the "who."

The "why," we'll find in the About section. Most websites will have an About section. And that'll tell us the aims of the organisation. It's a treaty to promote intergovernmental protection, and the website has documentation information.

And the "when" is another important criteria. So quite often, web pages will have a "last updated" note at the bottom.

KAREN FOLEY: It's right at the bottom, isn't it?

WENDY
CHALMERS: Yes. And alternatively, you can just look at the documents and entries and see how recently it's been updated. So "Who? Why? When?" is quite useful criteria for websites.

NICOLA BEER: Yeah, so the WWW-- "Who? Why? When?,"-- that's a really good quick win with websites. But if you're looking at academic articles--

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, I know this one. This is a good one.

NICOLA BEER: Everyone knows this one. You'll come to know it very well as an OU student. So this is PROMPT, which is a bit more in-depth and is more useful if, as I said, if you're looking at an academic article. So we'll just quickly through those.

WENDY
CHALMERS: So PROMPT. First of all, the first P is for Presentation. And there you're talking about the clarity of the language. Is the author communicating their meaning clearly? And also with a website, you could be talking about the layout, the navigation-- is it is easy to find information?

Relevance. You might be thinking, how relevant is it to your need? Is it the correct geographical area? Is it the right level? For example, is it written for a school child or is it written for an academic?

And finally, Objectivity. You're looking at whether there is any bias. Is the argument supported by evidence? Or is it simply opinion supported by fact?

NICOLA BEER: And the M, which is for Method, that's really looking at how the research has been conducted. So if a trial took place, it's things like how many participants were there? Was there a control subject? All those kinds of things can help you to see whether it's really a stringent, proper research trial.

KAREN FOLEY: Resource, yeah.

NICOLA BEER: And the second P is for Provenance. And that is really about where the information came from. So if it's a well-known author, then that should give you some hints that it's probably a decent source. Obviously, sometimes you get things from unknown people. That doesn't mean that they're bad. You just need to think a little bit more carefully.

And finally, the T, for Timeliness, which is thinking about how old is the resource that you're using? So sometimes really old sources can actually still be one of the most relevant. But it is worth just checking, as anything more recent come out that supersedes it? Or is it just a bit too dated for your purposes?

WENDY CHALMERS: I'd just like to go back to the point about relevance and just to add-- when you're looking for an article on a topic, and for example, if you're looking for an article but illegal drugs, you'd think about your actual need. It could be about the crime. It could be about the social cost. It could be, like, the psychological aspects. So it's important to think about the emphasis of an article or a source of information, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: It's a great tool, I think. Because so often, we think, oh, well yes, we might not trust everything online. We can see how that might be a bit shady. But these books, we think, oh, well, it's in a book. It's in a published book. Even if it's an OU book, it must be true.

And like you're saying, you know, sometimes it's worth thinking about that context and what you want to know. And not even whether it's a good piece of research, but whether it's good to back up the argument, specifically, that you're trying to make, isn't it?

And I guess that's why we have these things like relevance. Of course it's going to be relevant to something. But how important? If we could only say a couple of things, how important would that bit be? And how can we then sort of frame that, in terms of making it relevant to what we're trying to say?

WENDY CHALMERS: It's quite important to be aware of your needs, what you actually need, before you source information.

KAREN FOLEY: Never got why presentation's so important though, other than that ROMPT, I think, wouldn't sound so good.

[LAUGHTER]

But I guess sometimes, when you're looking at articles and things, if it's really not very well put together, it makes it really hard to actually read. And sometimes you can find a better source that's a bit shorter.

WENDY CHALMERS: That's right, yeah. Don't struggle with a difficult source. If you can find something that explains it a little bit more clearly, it's often useful to go there.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Right, well, we've got another thing to talk about as well, haven't we?

WENDY CHALMERS: Oh, I'd just like to mention another set of criteria, and that's the CAN criteria. And a similar set of criteria-- that's Credibility, Agenda, and again, Need. You can see it's similar things. Who is the author? What's your need, and what's their agenda?

And you will find more about this criteria on Being Digital. And Being Digital is a set of activities which is available in the Resources link, a link to the session. And you will find a pathway there with a few activities on who to trust online, who and what to trust online. So you'll be able to read a little bit more about the CAN criteria and the other evaluation criteria that we've also mentioned, as well as issues surrounding Wikipedia. So we strongly recommend you have a look at the Being Digital activities.

KAREN FOLEY: So that's on the Resources section of the website. You can go to that tab when you're out of the Live Chat and find all of those links, favourite them, et cetera. And I guess in terms of these things, would you recommend then that students might think about some of these ideas? Maybe make a note of them by their desk, just to remind themselves to think about it. They might not need to fill it in all the time, but I guess it just sort of helps to frame things, doesn't it?

NICOLA BEER: Yeah. I think that's why the frameworks are so useful, because you can just put a little sticky note that has PROMPT written on it. And even if you don't always apply absolutely everything in there, it keeps it in mind. You remember to really think about what you're reading.

WENDY CHALMERS: I agree. I think a lot of people are thinking about these already, but it's just nice to have it set down, and tick a few of them off as you go along.

KAREN FOLEY: I also find them, in my teaching, quite useful for comparative purposes. Sometimes if you've got two sources and you fill in one of those forms, you can go, hang on, there's no method here. This is just someone's opinion. So therefore, should I be adjusting some of this weight?

So I think those things can be quite useful as those frameworks. You could can just them down. You don't need to fill them out in their entirety like you do on some Assess tasks and modules, but like we're saying, a framework is very nice. Excellent.

Now, was that all? Because I know there's loads of chat on the Social Media Desk, and I'm very keen to get some questions in that. So can we go to the Social Media Desk? HJ and Rachel?

RACHEL: Oh, everyone at home's been absolutely loving the PROMPT. Just going to take some graffiti off of the wall. PROMPT-- a lot of students have that handy when they're doing the TMAs and their assignments. They have it hanging on the wall. So that's a vital resource, and we've been sharing that information for the Resources page. And obviously WWW, as well, because that's an easy one to remember.

HJ: Yeah, yeah. And Doris told us about PEER, as well, which is make Points, have Evidence, Explanation, and then you Reference it, which is really good. And some people are saying that they can watch this again on Catch Up so they can make more notes. And I think by the end of it, a few of us are going to have some full notebooks. Because there's loads of good points, and people are loving this.

RACHEL: So when will Catch Up service be available for this library session, so that students can be aware of that?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, the Catch Up will be available 24 hours after now, so around this time tomorrow. But like we say, there's a lot on the website that people can access now. Although you have to be careful that you don't sort of end up in a sort of dearth of procrastination going through various things, because there is so much information there. But this session will be available 24 hours later so you can pick up all of those tips, et cetera, from there.

WENDY And you will find lots of tips on the library website in the Help and Support area.

CHALMERS:

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Are there any other questions that people have got about the library?

HJ: Yeah, a lot of people just starting off want to know how they can start using the library and what help is out there. Because it seems like there's so much on there that it might get a bit too much. And if there's anything that can help people out, get started, and get practicing.

WENDY

CHALMERS:

There is a massive amount of information at the library website. Some of it is split up into different areas. So if you're studying, for example, psychology, social sciences, there's is a Selected Resources for your study area. And that will help you sort of familiarise yourself with resources in that particular area.

And I mentioned earlier, there's lots of help about how to find information for your assignment, how to find particular resources. So there's a lot of guidance there. I don't know if you want to add anything, Nicola.

NICOLA BEER:

Well, I think as a quick win, there is a Getting Started box right in the middle of the library web page. So if they click on that, that will take you direct to some help sources. And we mentioned OU Live sessions earlier. There's actually one on tomorrow at 10:00 AM that you can come along to. And you get to that just by clicking on the Training and Events section.

KAREN FOLEY:

We'll also put a link on the website to that session. So if you want to go along, 10 o'clock tomorrow, you can get started tomorrow with all of that.

Before we close, though, I'd just like to sort of sum up with some of the things the library do. Because obviously we're having this content that's very much social science-related. But because there are so many new students, I just think, let's see if I can remember all the sots of various supports that you've got.

Because the OU library is both a physical entity, where there are librarians who specialise in various areas, and you have some books upstairs. And you have a lot of module materials. And of course, then the massive, massive database that any OU student can access, completely free of charge, to get so many articles from.

So we've got all of that. That is the library. But in terms of support students can have, we can do topic-related things, like about digital identities, about learning to use social media. And you'll have to jump in here and fill me in on those, because I can tell you're desperate to talk about them, and we've only got two minutes.

[LAUGHTER]

WENDY

CHALMERS:

Oh, there are various activities, how to find information. And as you're studying with the University, you will find activities within your modules on how to develop your skills in finding an evaluation. And hopefully those skills will develop as you progress through level 1, level 2, and

level 3.

So we use our sources in that way. And there's also, as you get to level 3, there's a mass of resources which you can use for your independent search. And actually for your own personal use, as well. There's a wealth of reference sources, which you may well want to dip in for any particular reason.

KAREN FOLEY: I'll be talking about a lot of that tomorrow. And I'm just conscious that we do need to move on to the next session, so I want to just sort of include some of the other aspects, as well. We've also got referencing help, don't we?

NICOLA BEER: Yes, we do. We've got both activities to help you with that. There's the *OU Harvard Guide*, which is incredibly useful, pretty much the bible of referencing. And we're always on the help desk, as well. So we know that referencing, a lot of people do struggle with it, because it's not pleasant. I don't think anyone enjoys it. But we've got the librarians on the help desk, so always contact us, and we can help you out with that.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So lots more than just literature searching. That's wonderful.

Well, we've got another session tomorrow which is about digital identities, which will be very interesting, especially for those of you on social media. So that will be great. But thank you very much, Wendy and Nicola, for coming along and for showing the friendly face of the library. And I'm very much hoping that students at home can come to that OU Live session tomorrow, and also that you can make contact with the library, where you can chat and ask them any questions that you do have.

We're going now to a quick ads break, which is a very interesting psychology experiment which is called "Dr. Zimbardo." So we'll be back in five minutes. Grab a cup of tea, if you want one. And then I'm going to be talking to Tori Cooper about managing realistic expectations. So we'll see you in five.

[MUSIC PLAYING]