

Telling the Story:

Using narratives to explain WHY information literacy education is important and get students invested in what we do

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Why are Stories so Powerful?

- Stories mirror human thought. People think in narrative structures
- Stories define who we are
- Stories build and preserve a group's sense of community
- Stories can cross the boundaries of language, age, race, gender and culture

Ways we can use Stories

- We can use personal stories to introduce ourselves and allow students relate to us.
- We can tell stories about our libraries to create a perception or attitude about the library on campus.
- We can tell stories to explain the mission or role of the library.
- We can use stories to begin a discussion in our instruction sessions. In our case, we used stories to highlight the information choices people make every day and introduce students to the concept of information literacy

The Knox Library and the FP

First-year Preceptorial (FP) is the only required course at Knox and introduces first-year students to some of the big questions that underlie a liberal arts education. FP is taught by faculty from all disciplines at Knox and meets 2-3 times a week in small-group format (around 12-15 students) and once a week in mass in an auditorium to watch films and/or hear presentations.

The library worked with the FP faculty directors to get the library involved in FP and ensure that all students are being introduced to information literacy during their first year. It was decided that the library would create an online information literacy tutorial that would be assigned by professors to their sections, and the library would be given time to introduce the tutorial during one of the mass auditorium gatherings.

The FP presentation was originally envisioned as just a short welcome and introduction to the online information literacy tutorial. However, the library realized this was a rare opportunity to address the entire first-year class, and we wanted to make the most of this encounter.

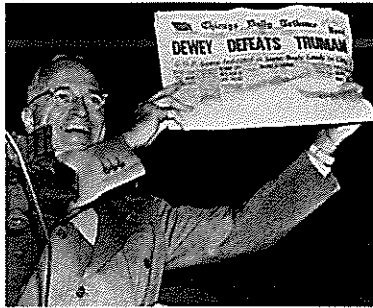
Instead of lecturing on information literacy, the library decided to take this opportunity to grab students' attention and show them WHY information literacy skills are important. As a result, the library created the **Bad Information Presentation**. This presentation consisted of five stories of bad information choices (some humorous, others with serious consequences) and library commentary and served as a contextual foundation for the tutorial and future library instruction sessions to build upon.

The goal of this presentation was to impart to students the BIG PICTURE of information literacy education. The library felt that the stories had the ability to expose the purpose (the WHY) of information literacy by giving students examples and allowing them to relate to someone.

The Bad Information Presentation

Finding examples of bad information choices was (sadly) not hard. The mass media offers a plethora of stories where bad information was disseminated to the general population. For the Bad Information Presentation at Knox, we used the book Regret the Error by Craig Silverman to find stories; this book (and active blog) reports on media corrections, retractions, apologies and trends regarding media accuracy. The library felt that media information errors offered larger-than-life examples of the consequences of bad information choices, while still coming down to the information decisions of a few people.

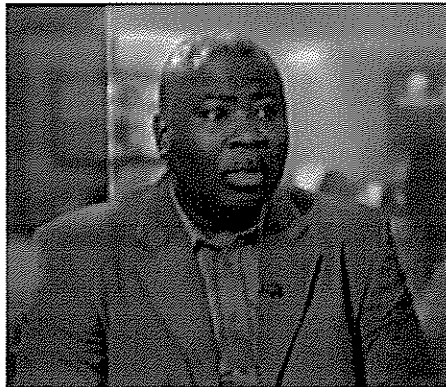
The five stories the Knox Library used in the Bad Information Presentation were:



#1 The Chicago Tribune
and the election of 1948



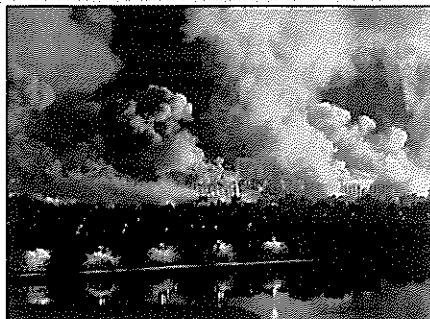
#2 Paul Vance Obituary



#3 The BBC and
the wrong Guy



#4 Fox News and
the Vorick family



#5 The New York Times and WMDs