

WHAT'S WRONG WITH GOOGLING?

Google is great for many things, but it doesn't make great academic research. Here's why!

1. WHO'S THE AUTHOR ANYWAY?

Does your doctor, lawyer, engineer or other professional “google” to solve problems for clients? I, for one, hope not! Google may seem to be convenient, but it's not always trustworthy and appropriate as the source for anything that is central to an argument, complex, or controversial. Check out www.martinlutherking.org. Sounds legit, right? Guess again. The author of this site seems to have an alternative agenda.

Subscription online databases such as Gale contain editorially selected articles from proprietary print reference, vetted links to websites, newspapers, primary sources, critical essays, and peer-reviewed academic journals. Google searches don't include these materials because they're copyrighted.

2. INFORMATION OVERLOAD!

A search engine is not an index. Have you ever done a search on IRAQ in Google? How many hits do you get? How can students sort and evaluate these millions of results efficiently and critically? Let's face it. Students may not care about where their information is coming from, but we all know that students want information FAST.

Online databases are indexed and designed to help students to find relevant, age-appropriate, authoritative result FAST and EFFICIENTLY.

3. GOT QUALITY?

You are going on vacation to Florida and wonder, “What will the weather be like?” Well, Google is the place to take a quick look and find out! But, if you find out you're going during hurricane season and want to write the definitive paper about regional weather patterns and global climate change, Google is no longer the place for you! It can be challenging, but we must equip students with the critical thinking skills to judge quality sources of information.

Online databases are a definitive source of information.

4. MAIL-ORDER BRIDES AND OTHER PAID ADVERTISING

Let's be real. Google is a profit machine. There's nothing wrong with that as long as we recognize that its content and results are not always entirely neutral sources of information. Companies spend time and money to optimize their sites to receive higher rankings in the search engines. Universities, non-profit, government agencies, and others often have the best information on a topic, but they are not optimized to appear at the top of the search engines. DO YOU want to spend your time sorting through what's legit and what's not?

Online subscription databases are commercial free and 100% curriculum relevant for students and teachers.

5. SEE FOR YOURSELF! Check out these websites—all found by surfing the Internet. Would you let your students cite these as legitimate resources?

<http://teachbytes.com/2012/11/01/test-website-evaluation-with-10-hilarious-hoax-sites/>