

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live. This session is about how to fight fake news with trusted content. And as you may have gathered, we've selected some wonderful topics and asked the experts in various areas of the Open University to come and explain some of them to you. And I'm joined by Wendy Chalmers and Helen Clough from the library.

And we're going to be talking about fake news. Now there's been so much discussion, well, for quite some time actually now about fake news. And I wanted to ask how our students can feel confident about any content that they read online and that they might want to use in their assignments? I mean, how can they know whether or not this can be trusted?

WENDY CHALMERS: Well, you're right. Fake news is a really hot topic, much debate about whether it's influenced the EU referendum and the US elections. But fake news is nothing new.

We talked to Helen earlier about, back in the Roman Empire, Octavian spread fake news about Mark Antony, suggesting that he is going to leave some of the Roman lands to Cleopatra. And this was spread by messenger throughout the Roman Empire, partly leading to the downfall of Mark Antony. So Octavian was doing this to discredit his rival.

But it's different nowadays. Because fake news spreads much more quickly. We share and use our social media without checking the references. However, it's not just fake news that's the issue. It's misleading headlines published in newspapers. And it's an accurate report, it's biased reports, which is freely available on internet.

And anyone can add information to the internet. And it's so easily accessible. So we really need to think about how we can address these issues. And Helen might give you some more examples.

HELEN CLOUGH: Yeah, we thought it might be nice if the audience could maybe send in some examples they've come across of fake news. I mean, probably the most famous one is, do you remember in Panorama in the 1950s, they did the spaghetti trees video on April Fools Day? If you're not familiar with it, then you can just Google it. And you can find the video. But that's a really famous one.

And one of my favourites is there was a report that five states in the US were going to ban the hobby of cosplay, which is dressing up as your favourite fictional character And a lot of people

believed that this was true. But if you actually go to the about page on the website, it does clearly explain that it's a satirical website.

So those are examples of ways that fake news has been used for entertainment purposes. But also, it can be used maliciously. It can be used to influence elections, but also to generate revenue. So you can see a lot of these sensational and provocative headlines on Facebook that encourage you to click on it.

And that's called click bait. And actually, the owners of the website, they get paid every time you click on that link. So that's something to bear in mind.

But if we expand the concept of fake news into misleading headlines, then that becomes much more relevant at university study level. For example, earlier this year, there was a Danish study published all about chocolate eating habits and heart disease. And the newspaper headlines that came out of this were really misleading.

So there was one in *The Daily Mail* that said, eating chocolate six times a week prevents heart disease. And if you actually read the research in *The British Medical Journal*, that's not what the researchers are saying. But what happens is that researchers send out press releases to journalists. And journalists, they need to make this research sound exciting.

KAREN FOLEY: Salacious, yeah.

HELEN CLOUGH: Exactly. Because they want to sell newspapers. They want people to click on their website to generate ad revenue. So it's always worth bearing in mind that, at university study level, you need to always have a critical eye. And we have developed and we publicised some evaluation frameworks that help you to critically evaluate this information. So Wendy's going to talk about the first one.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So this is who, why, when framework. So these frameworks are very useful if you want not to be taken in by fake news and you want to make sure you're picking good information for your assignments. So first of all, the who of the who, why, when, you're thinking about who published it, who's the author? Are they an expert in their field, or do they have any personal biases?

The why-- on many websites, you'll find an about section. And that will explain the aims of the website. So whether it, for example, is crisis or shelter and their aim is to look at the causes of homelessness and prevent homelessness, or if it's a website such as the African Eurasian

Water Board Agreement and they are there to protect those birds. So there's a lot of freely available information. But you do need to apply these criteria.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's about why their intention, what their intention is.

WENDY What their intention, isn't it? Whether it's to promote something-- I mean, they may be there to
CHALMERS: promote the sale of biscuits. But it's quite important to understand that the why of the why the information was produced.

And finally, we have the when. And that's looking at the date. Is the information up-to-date? Was it published two or three years ago? So that's quite important criteria. And we can't talk about trusted content without talking about Wikipedia, because that always comes up in this context.

KAREN FOLEY: Especially an academic one.

WENDY Yeah, so this is [INAUDIBLE] too. You can apply to Wikipedia. Because one of the first--
CHALMERS: Wikipedia is a source. It's a very popular source. And many people will turn to it, myself included. Because it's so easily accessible.

But one thing to remember is that anyone can contribute. They're not necessarily an expert in the field. And topics which are popular may have very lengthy articles.

They are subject to misinformation. But there are also guidelines. Some of the guidelines are there's supposed to be objective. There's no original research. And everything should be supported by references. Everything being written should have a reference.

And it's really useful, if you look at that reference, if you can follow that up. And that's something you might be able to use the Open University Library for, is where you might find some more trusted content.

HELEN CLOUGH: Yeah, yeah, we would always recommend you use the library's content. Because it has been selected for quality and also to match the OU's curriculum and research as well. So we would recommend that new students just go to the library website. You'll see a library search box on the Home Page.

Pop in your search terms. And see what you get. You really can't break it. And the kind of content that you will come across are journals, books, audiovisual collections, newspapers,

both current and archive, and also tabloid and broadsheet as well. And a great alternative to Wikipedia is the reference collections.

So we have things like *The Oxford English Dictionary*. There's a collection called Very Short Introductions, which is a great sort of mini introduction to a subject. And then we also have the subject collections as well.

So for example, you might have used the Dictionary of Psychology in your role as a psychology tutor. And we have arranged our content by subject as well on the library website. We've picked out the most relevant resources for a particular discipline. So, yeah, so I would say, use the library content.

There's something called peer review as well that's worth being aware of. The articles that are in our reference collections will have been written and reviewed by experts. And we also have access to peer-reviewed journals, like *The British Medical Journal* where that research the Danes did about chocolate and heart disease.

So you can actually read the original research and come to your own conclusions about what it's saying. And peer review is, again, it's about the work has been reviewed by experts in the field. So you can more or less guarantee that it is trusted content.

Having said that, even at university level, you need to learn not to take things at face value. You need to be critical of everything you're reading and putting into your assignments. So we have another evaluation framework that's a little bit more in-depth called Prompt. So you might want to use that for formal academic material.

WENDY

CHALMERS:

So as Helen said, even though you're using trusted collections, such as the Open University Library, students will still need to pick the most relevant and appropriate information for their assignment. And so once you've done your search, perhaps using library search, you can have a look at this criteria. And you will find more about these criteria on the library website. There's more information and then the links associated with this.

KAREN FOLEY:

And some of them-- I mean, this one is used in one of the modules I teach on SDK228. So some of them might be embedded within a module.

WENDY

CHALMERS:

Yes, they're very popular in particularly level 1 and level 2 modules. And they are applied to different types of sources, not just journal articles, but a whole range of sites, even audiovisual material. But first of all, the presentation, you're looking at the clarity of the language. Or it

could even be a website, you're looking at how easy it is to navigate the website, the layout, but principally, the clarity of the language, how clearly the author communicates their ideas.

The relevance, that's the relevance to your particular subject. So whether it's the right geographical level, the right academic level, whether it's more relative to PhD students or a level 1 undergraduate, and also, whether it's the right emphasis on the topic. One of my examples is illegal drugs. Is it the social cost, the psychological effects, or the criminal? There's just different aspects of a topic.

Objectivity, you're looking to see if there's any bias or whether any of the arguments are supported by evidence or if they're simply masquerading as opinion. Methods, you might be looking at the sample size, whether it's representative. Provenance, similar from the who of the who, why, when, who is the author? Are they an expert in the field? Or is it published in a peer-reviewed journal? So as Helen mentioned, they're written, in theory, by experts, but reviewed by other experts in their field.

And finally, the timeliness factor, again, looking at the publication date. Is there more up-to-date information which is more relevant? And this does depend on the topic. In many subject areas, there are many classic articles, which can be old but still equally valid. But it's just something to take into consideration. So that's The PROMPT criteria.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent, well, thank you. Well, you asked our audience earlier about whether they had heard of any fake news. And they've all been chatting. 95% have already found the library website. But I would like to talk to you about some of the aspects on that in just a short minute. There's a real range of students here, again, predominantly a level 1, but a lot of social sciences, stem and art students.

So again, those sort of subject-specific disciplines will be really great for finding definitions of things that you might want to outline in your assignment. So that can be brilliant. Although, of course, whilst the library is an amazing resource, we must sort of encourage students to use it appropriately and not just go off and say, this is a brilliant essay title. I'm going to go here.

Because often, they'll need to rely on some of the module material and really read the assessment guidelines as well. Because it's all too easy to get lost in live research with fabulous articles. HJ, what, is everyone chatting about at home?

HJ: We've got a lot of thoughts about fake news. So US election always comes up when we're

talking about that. Joe's been fooled by fake news. I've been fooled by fake news Claudia says, sometimes data and statistics are misused to drive a certain agenda. And Angela about the WHO part says, there's some fake news articles. She's seen other articles written by this person had said that her Dutch teachers had eaten children. So, yeah, perhaps, look at what else they've written might help.

And Joe says, sometimes they're a bit tricky. Because we've got a lot of satire these days, so trying to work out whether it's satirical or not. And Natalie says, is fake news as new as I think? Or is it just a big thing lately, as it's been spread more online? Or has it always been around?

And Rue says, consider who funds the research as well and who the researchers work for. So that my help just talking about, in the US, there's been some studies looking at law research and how that seems to be a bit skewed sometimes. So I think we've got some very good tools from the library that we'll post in the chat as well that we can use to help us assess this information.

HELEN CLOUGH: That's fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, and then lots of chat. And yeah, apparently News Dumper isn't the best source of material for your essays. But is it the case with this fake news, because so much of it, like from the gossip that we were talking about earlier, the fact that things are printed, the fact that sometimes they can have this academic language, the fact that sometimes you can read in a newspaper, a glass of wine a day is good for you or lots of chocolate, and we've got this bias, and this whole thing.

Ah, yes, that supports what I believe. I'm not going to look into it any further. So we can sort of see how this works, just in terms of a social level and confirming our biases.

But equally, sometimes students will think, oh, well, I'll just put that in my assignment. And you've mentioned some of the ways that you can check some of those aspects, in terms of the evaluative framework and also the references on Wikipedia. But Wendy, you did say that you use Wikipedia as well. So I just sort of wanted to touch on when these things were good?

Because I use Wikipedia as well. I never refer to it in anything I write. But sometimes it's really helpful to watch a YouTube video on how to do something or to get another source of information. Because it can help shift your thinking. So these sources do have their time and place. I wonder if you can tell us about what you would recommend, in terms of their use?

WENDY

CHALMERS:

If I'm sitting in the living room, I want to know something, I want to find out something quickly, I will go to Wikipedia. But at the same time, I find some information, I do sometimes take it with a pinch of salt and think, well, I might check that, check that further, check that further in a, perhaps, a reference source in the OU Library. And another one I go to is *Encyclopedia Britannica*. So that's a really great reference source that you could dip into quite easily and find some really useful information.

And it's good background information, just a bit-sized information just to get you started. And then if you want to go further, you can start looking for e-books, start Live Research to find one of thousands of e-books, which are available on the subject and also journal articles as well. So it's a starting point, I would say, for any research. But remember, the alternatives of the library reference sources as well, which are fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, what would you say, Helen?

HELEN CLOUGH: Yeah, I would say also, there are fact-checking sites out there that you can also visit, like the NHS Behind the Headlines is a great one. So if you read that headline in *The Daily Mail* that said, eating chocolate six days a week will prevent a heart attack, maybe go to the NHS Behind the Headline site and see what they're saying about it. Because they actually pick apart the research. And they analyse it. And then they draw on other research. And they give a considered, obviously, expert opinion of the NHS.

Another one is More or Less on Radio 4, which is actually on OU co-production. And I download that podcast. And it's a wonderful source. Because basically, they go behind the statistics that you find in the headlines and analyse whether or not they're actually correct.

One of my favourite episodes was all about the number of people in the crowd at Trump's inauguration. That was fascinating. So yeah, I highly recommend that.

Another well-known one is Snopes. BBC News and Channel 4 News both have their own fact-checking websites. So yeah, so have a look at those sites as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Because it's all about being critical and recognising that everything has a given time and a place and the knowledge is generated from a certain perspective. And I guess that's the take-home message that we're encouraging students to think about is that, whatever you're reading, even if it's a piece of module material, or it's something on Wikipedia, or somewhere else in the newspaper, you think about why it's being written, what basis there is, really, for

that claim. And does that evidence actually support that claim?

And that's the whole sort of cycle that we go through when we're studying-- isn't it-- with varying degrees of complexity. OK, excellent. So I wanted to ask about how people can access help and support from the library as well. And I know we've got some other sessions tomorrow from the library. So we'll be telling you all about that. But briefly, what are some of the ways that we can sort of access the library help and support, in terms of this whole subject of fake news? Because you're doing quite a bit on this.

WENDY

We are. So we did a series of Facebook Live videos back in May that are now up on YouTube.

CHALMERS:

And you can also find them on the library website on the Training and Events tab all about how to spot fake news. So have a look at those videos. Remember that we have a help desk. And you could contact those via the web chat 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

When we go home, you're put through to a partner librarian in the United States. So take advantage of that. And we have various source guides and help and support articles on the library website. So do have a look. And the online training sessions--

KAREN FOLEY:

Oh, yes, you've got two coming up.

WENDY

So tonight, yeah-- they're 30 minutes long. You don't need to book. You just turn up. Tonight,

CHALMERS:

we've got two, one on referencing one on using library databases.

KAREN FOLEY:

Brilliant.

WENDY

And then tomorrow evening, I'm doing a couple. I'm doing one as an introduction to the library

CHALMERS:

services. So that might be a good one to attend if you're new to the OU. And then after, that I'm doing all about Live Research.

KAREN FOLEY:

Yeah. Where is this happening?

WENDY

So you can find links to them on the Home Page of the library website.

CHALMERS:

KAREN FOLEY:

Oh, so they're online?

WENDY

Yes, sorry.

CHALMERS:

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

WENDY
CHALMERS: I didn't say that, so yeah, live and online. Use Adobe Connect, which is the OU's new tool for tutorials.

KAREN FOLEY: It's a fabulous opportunity try and get into that tutorial room that you'll be using as part of your studies as well. And we put the links, I think, on the abstract for the session. So they're on the Resources page of the Student Hub Live if you do get stuck. But yeah, turn up to those. That'll be brilliant.

HELEN CLOUGH: And also to mention they're being digital sites, which is a field from the library. And that's a collection of some bite-size activities. And there is a trust online pathway, which is various short activities on and evaluation frameworks and some hot tips.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. Excellent. Well, there's going to be a lot more from the library later today. But we've had a lot of chat going on as well while you've been talking. It's really, really lovely.

We'd all like to see a picture of Edward's new study. So Edward, if you could send us a picture by any means, really, email is studenthub@open.ac.uk. Or you can send it to us on Twitter @studenthub. And the hashtag is #studenthublive17. So we'd love to see your new study. And if you've got a nice study area as well, why don't you send us a picture? And HJ can put that on the board a little bit later.

Jane says she'd like to know whether chocolate helps you study? Well, Jane, stay tuned for our next session. Because I've got some of the sports and fitness team coming to tell us all about this very popular topic of conversation. But Wendy and Helen, thank you very much for joining us today.

And do check out those events on at the library on the website. They're really, really brilliant. And they're a great way to be shown around and also to meet other students as well. OK, we're going to have a quick video, which is our library tour video. And then join me afterwards for our next session with Ben and Natalie, where we talk about nutrition and sleep.

[MUSIC PLAYING]