

## Information Overload – Looking at News

By Kelly Robart

### Resources

- [College Professors and Students Jump into the Wiki World](#)

“There’s still a lot of work to be done before Wikipedia entries will be accepted as credible sources by the academic community – and with good reason. But to me it’s interesting to note that while the word wars wage, some members of the respected academic world are opting to collaborate with Wikipedia to elevate and validate its content. And that’s exactly what Web 2.0 is all about.”

- [DOE: Use Social Networks to Find Best Digital Textbook Resources](#)
- [Where Can Teachers Start? Step 1: Look to Your Peers](#)

### Context/ Critical Issue

As the platforms for disseminating information become accessible to more people, the sheer volume of information can become overwhelming. Equally daunting is the number of information sources to choose from. Traditional media sources, online news, podcasts, blogs, Twitter and social media all offer a wealth of information on seemingly every topic.

With so many sources vying for our attention, how do we negotiate these streams of information? Whose voice is credible? Who do we believe? Critical thinking and media literacy become key 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for navigating this Web 2.0 landscape.

### Vocabulary Check

Ensure students understand the following terms:

<i>traditional media</i>	<i>social media</i>	<i>social networks</i>	<i>new media</i>
<i>Web 2.0</i>	<i>podcasts</i>	<i>blogs</i>	

### Preview Questions: Where do you get your news?

Invite responses to the following questions:

1. Do you follow the news?
2. When something important happens in your home country, where do you look for information?
3. Do we get news in a different way than we did 20 years ago?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of traditional media sources e.g. radio, television and newspapers?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of new media?

6. Can you think of examples in the news worldwide where social media played an important role?
7. Are there news sources that represent your views?

Working in groups, ask students to share their responses and list sources they regularly go to for news. In the whole group, compare sources listed and discuss the relative credibility of each source. How do students determine which source of information is most reliable or trustworthy? What criteria would they use to make these judgments?

## Focus Questions

### News Analysis – Comparison

1. In their groups, ask students to research the same current event and prepare summaries for the class. Direct them to sources such as television, newspapers, online news sites, blogs, Facebook and other social media sites.
2. Ask each group to compare two different sources from the following list and note what was different in terms of content, perspective and style (language and visuals).
  - Mainstream newspapers - different papers
  - Mainstream newspapers - one American and one from a country of their choosing
  - Television news – across channels
  - Television news - one American station and one from a country of their choosing
  - Blog posts
  - Social network sites
3. Invite students to make short presentations to the class about their findings.
4. Engage the class in a discussion about the different information sources.
5. With so many sources of information available, what kinds of skills are necessary for staying informed?
6. How do you decide if a source is credible?
7. Ask the students which news sources most closely represent their views.

## Media Piece

Launch a **news survey** with your students to find out where their peers go to for news. They should each interview one student – native or non-native speaker - and ask them the following 5 questions and then post responses on the **KQED ESL Mobile News blog** at <http://kqedeslnews.blogspot.com/>. A short bio of the interviewee and a photograph would help to contextualize the comments.

They can also follow the sample blogpost on **KQED ESL Mobile News** and use the guidelines below to frame their interview.

- 1 Start by asking your interviewee a few simple questions so that you can write a short bio about them.
- 2 Ask them to respond to these 5 questions about the news.
  - Do you follow the news?
  - Where do you look?
  - What interests you in particular?
  - Who do you believe? What news sources do you believe?
  - Are your perspectives being represented?
- 3 Take a photo of the interviewee or of something that resonates with their answers. Ensure you have the interviewee's permission to post their photograph on the blog before proceeding.

Write to [meinhorn@kqed.org](mailto:meinhorn@kqed.org) for permission to add authors to post to the **KQED ESL Mobile News blog** - <http://kqedeslnews.blogspot.com/>. Directions will be given on how to enable students to post to the blog from their mobile devices.

### **Extension Activities**

For a more ambitious project, suggest that students produce a class media project using the results of either the surveys or the comparison projects. Ask them to brainstorm possible ways of presenting their information. Examples to consider: a website featuring written content, a mock television newscast, an associated Facebook page etc.

### **Review/Reflection Activity**

Be sure to review whichever activity you choose.

Invite students to review the activity. What went well? What would they change? In what ways? Were they surprised by the results?