Disinformation during a pandemic

Disinformation is spread by those seeking to promote incorrect or misleading information. Misinformation is spread by those who unwittingly share information that is incorrect (often originally published as Disinformation). Dictionary.com has a good explanation of this difference (https://www.dictionary.com/e/misinformation-vs-disinformation-get-informed-on-the-difference/). This guide focuses on Disinformation.

Steps to evaluating and sharing information

1) Stop and Think. Take a closer look.

2) Consider the Source. Then consider the source’s source. Use Google to verify.

3) Look for information that is difficult to fake - verified social media accounts, entire websites (multi-page).

4) Note inconsistencies: misspellings, mis-capitalizations, etc.

5) Do not assume that if a single fact is correct, that all facts stated are correct.

6) Avoid sharing clickbait and emotional appeals.

7) Be wary of silly sounding sources.

8) Could it be a joke or satire? Make sure you know before sharing.

9) Unsure? Err on the side of NOT sharing.

10) Remember that we all make mistakes. Own up if you’ve shared incorrect information.

Where to get information

Here are several reliable sources of medical information related to Covid-19:

- Coronavirus | WHO - https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

Beware of scams

Some have decided to capitalize on the Coronavirus epidemic by sending out emails and making phone calls offering services and goods that aren’t real. Don’t send anyone money until you’ve read these:

- Coronavirus Rumor Control | FEMA.gov - https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/rumor-control

Additional resources

Feel like you need some more training on this? Who doesn’t? Try these easy to digest sources:

- Online Verification video series with Mike Caufield (12min) - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpGAWtAgAHGwLfsavu98VYeDpGnmAHZ5v
- Quiz: Debunking the coronavirus | BBC Bitesize - https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zjswwty

Compiled by Laurie Dreyer, Reference Librarian, June 2020