Hi I'm Kimberly Wirth, a librarian at the Porter Henderson Library. Today we're going to talk about information and the need to be critical of what you see, hear, or read. Why? Because information impacts decisions you make, whether it’s for an assignment, employment, or for personal knowledge.
Information is everywhere and exists for different reasons and, as researchers, we need to be able to tell good information from bad so that we can select resources that are best suited for our assignments. With so many outlets, the current information environment is abundant, but it can also be undependable.

One way in which information is undependable is that it can be wrong. This can be by accident such as in “Breaking News” situations when reporters are trying to get information out to the public as quickly as possible. A famous example of this comes from one newspaper’s incorrect reporting of the outcome of the 1948 presidential election.
Other times, authors can use bad judgment. For example, The New York Times corrected a column containing quotes from an interview with Kanye West that never occurred. That’s a big mistake! The author didn’t use a credible source and didn’t provide an attribution so readers could check the facts.

A more serious example of information being wrong is when publishers retract articles because they discover that information has been manipulated.
Or even faked! Fortunately, a process known as **peer review** helps reduce the likelihood of bad information appearing in articles found in scholarly journals.

Another way information can be undependable is by being biased. Bias occurs when an author allows personal beliefs or opinions to replace objectivity. For example: author Mike Daisey gave a report about his experiences visiting a Chinese factory where he claimed to witness very dramatic and dire working conditions.
But eventually admitted to embellishing his experiences. Mr. Daisey manipulated information so it told the story he wanted to tell, not the one that had actually occurred.

His actions reflected a loss of objectivity in preparing his report. Sometimes bias is easily spotted and other times, it comes to light only after analyzing information.

When they learn of an error, reputable publishers will print retractions or may even pull the story. However, it is difficult to eliminate the impact of unreliable information once it is out there because not everyone will be aware that this occurred. Therefore, it is difficult to erase bad information from our collective memories.
These examples demonstrate that bad information is out there by being incorrect or biased. So, when we’re faced with new information we need to be critical and evaluate it, especially when we are using it for a grade or to make important decisions.

One way to evaluate is by having a set of criteria to test information.

This concludes the video on Critical Thinking about Information. Don’t forget to watch our video on how to evaluate.