# The world of information

EMELS

Use of information

We live in the times of information overload. And although we are surrounded by information, we struggle to search for it and use it effectively. Looking for a recipe (so many to choose from!), reading news (can I really trust this information?), preparing a presentation (which materials do I really need?) – the list of examples is endless.
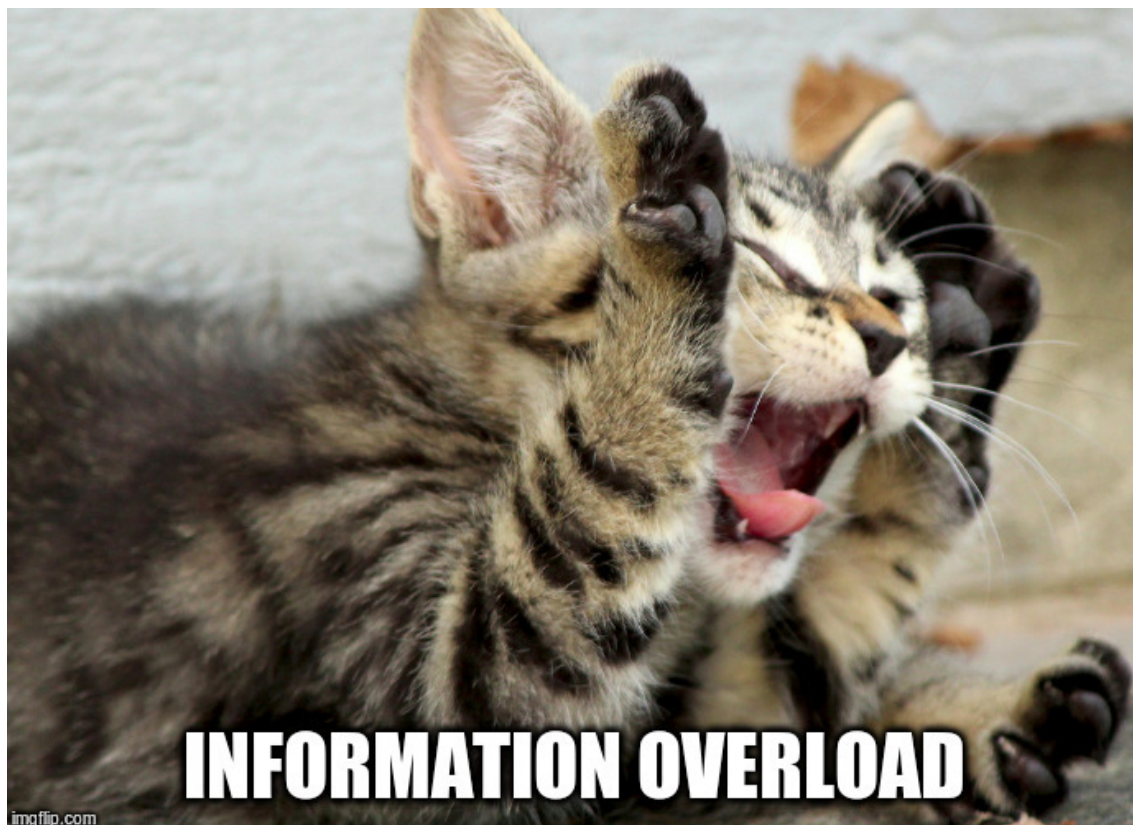
When we are looking for information it is often easier to use a source that we are familiar with. We build habits of looking for materials that we need. However sometimes it's worth to stop and think about planning our work with information and choosing the most effective strategy. It allows us to be more efifcient and save time. One of the most popular models presenting strategy of information search is the Big 6. It can be used by people of all ages to solve any information problem.

The model describes 6 stages of work:

1. Task Definition *(what information do I need?)*

1.1 Define the information problem

1.2 Identify information needed

2. Information Seeking Strategies *(Which sources shall I use?)*

2.1 Determine all possible sources

2.2 Select the best sources

3. Location and Access *(I will check here...)*

3.1 Locate sources (intellectually and physically)

3.2 Find information within sources

4. Use of Information *(O, here it is!)*

4.1 Engage (e.g., read, hear, view, touch)

4.2 Extract relevant information

5. Synthesis *(Now I'm ready!)*

5.1 Organize from multiple sources

5.2 Present the information

6. Evaluation *(Am I happy with my results?)*

6.1 Judge the product (effectiveness)

6.2 Judge the process (efficiency)

Searching for information on-line

Internet is often our primary source of information. There are some ways of using it more effectively. You can use advanced search options or apply a few simple tools:

- AND — you will see results where both words appear, e.g. car AND mercedes. It can be replaced with "+" (car +mercedes)

- OR — you will see results where one of the words appear, e.g. boat OR ship OR yacht

- NOT – you will see results without selected word, e.g. fruit NOT apples. It can be replaced with "-" (car -mercedes)

You can also narrow down search results to:

- documents titles — using "title:" (e.g. title:media)

- specific site — using "site:" (e.g. site:wikipedia.org cookies)

- links to a specific site — using "link:" (e.g. link:emels.eu)

- files in a specific format — using "filetype:" (e.g. filetype:pdf)

You can also use these tools in the advanced search options. You will also find there an option to look for content in a specific language. To get better search results also remember to:

- choose your key words carefully

- use good search engine or change it when your results aren't satisfactory

- use the most important word as the first in a search phrase

- put a search phrase in quotation marks, which will allow you to find the exact phrase in the search results

If you want to know more about how a search engine works and why certain webpages come up first in your search results, have a look at the video prepared by Code.org:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVV_93mBfSU

Filter bubble

We receive media messages every day, but quite often we forget that media content is usually driven by money. Messages cannot be created without financing, therefore they are shaped by advertisers and a model picture of their recipients. This last one tends to be simplified and based on stereotypes.

This, together with our habits to use a certain type of media, as well as algorithms matching search results with our browsing history, can further influence our views and choices. To some extent we all live in a "bubble", reducing the variety of information and ideas that reach us. Being familiar with a language of certain groups that share common values,we miss the difference between a fact and a way of presenting it.

In addition, our search results depend on search history and profiling system. Profiling is a mechanism which classifies people according to their characteristics and behaviours. You can see it for example on Facebook, which remembers our "likes" in order to show us targeted adverts and different online book, music or film services. They analyse decisions of users, so we can see titles chosen by people who were profiled as similar to us. You will get different results using a library PC and your personal device. The reason for it is convenience – and it works fine when it comes to finding a local pizzeria, but in many cases narrowing search results can be unwelcome. If you often look for information about travelling abroad and you put „Egypt" in a search bar, most likely you will not find information about democratic protests. Profiling also makes it more difficult to find opinions which, according to collected data, might be different to yours.

How to pop a filter bubble?

1. Use different browsers for different purposes (Firefox, Chromium).
2. Use search engines that do not profile their users, e.g. Duckduckgo.com, Ixquick.com.
3. Use your clicks carefully. Limit "likes" in social media.
4. If you use e-mail in your browser, remember to log out when your work is finished.
5. Remember to log out from social media after you finished using it.
6. Change your browser settings so your search history is cleared automatically after you close it.
7. Use different email accounts for different purposes.
8. Install plugins deleting cookies and blocking user tracking scripts in your browsers
9. Reduce the amount of shopping on-line.
10. Limit your social media usage.

Activities

1. How to work with information?

1. Come up with a list of tasks/problems to solve related to school assignments, interests or life choices of the participants. Divide them in small groups. Every team should receive one task from the list. Ask each group to define their information need (*What information do you need to complete this task? Where are you going to search for it?*) and information sources. For example:

1. You are writing an essay on topic "Is Romeo from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliette* drama a tragic hero?"

- Information needs: What are the characteristics of a tragic hero? What do we know about Romeo?

- Sources: Wikipedia, Encycloapedia, literature textbook.

2. Your friend is hesitating between going to Paris and Sicily for holidays. Recommend one of the desitnations.

- Information needs: What does she like to do in her free time? Does she mind hot weather? What tourist attractions do Paris and Sicily have to offer?

- Sources: conversation with your friend, internet forum, guidebook

In the next step ask the groups to discuss advantages and disadvantages of each source. For example:

- Wikipedia – advantages: easy to use,up to date, disadvantages: might contain mistakes

- Textbook – advantages: professional knowledge, disadvantages: might be outdated

- Internet forum – advantages: enables reviewing opinions of many people, disadvantages: contains very subjective opinions

2. Search engine secrets

Divide participants in pairs. Each pair should work with one computer or a smartphone. Hand each pair a copy of a "Search engine secrets" handout with a list of tasks and ask them to note the number of pages found using different search techniques. To see examples and answers go to "Search engine secrets" trainer's tips.

Based on:

- Michael B. Eisenberg, Robert E. Berkowitz http://big6.com/pages/about/big6-skills-overview.php

- Urszula Dobrowolska, Michał Wysocki, Justyna Jasiewicz „Jak planować pracę z informacją?" http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/lekcje/planowac-prace-z-informacja/, „Sekrety wyszukiwarek" http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/lekcje/sekrety-wyszukiwarek/, „Gdzie szukać informacji?" http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/lekcje/gdzie-szukac-informacji/, „Strategiczne my-ślenie w wyszukiwaniu informacji" http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/lekcje/strategiczne-myslenie-w-wyszukiwaniu-informacji/, „Co wpływa na przekazy medialne?" http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/lekcje/co-wplywa-na-przekazy-medialne/, CC BY-SA

- Urszula Dobrzańska, Weronika Paszewska, Wojciech Budzisz, Michał „rysiek" Woźniak, Kamil Śliwowski „Jak jeste-śmy profilowani w sieci?" http://edukacjamedialna.edu.pl/lekcje/jak-jestesmy-profilowani-w-sieci/, CC BY-SA

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