

## How Library Stuff Works Videos: Information Creation as a Process

Maria is writing a research paper for her classes using scholarly sources such as peer reviewed articles and academic books.

She is interested in looking at the role of Social Media in launching the #MeToo movement, a movement that denounces sexual assault and harassment.

Maria starts her background research on Google and although the movement only broke in October 2017, there are already over 90 million results available!

Excited she heads to the library but when she tries inputting the same search into the library catalogue she arrives at 0 results!

Frustrated Maria books a research consultation with one of the university librarians who teaches her about the information cycle and how it may be affecting her ability to find scholarly resources.

By understanding the information cycle Maria and you, both, will better be able to recognize what type of information is available on a topic, when and in what format.

According to the University of Illinois, the information cycle is “the progression of media coverage of a particular newsworthy event.” This means that information becomes available in different formats in the days, weeks, months and years following an event.

On the day of an event, social media breaks the news. Shortly after, it is addressed online, on TV and on the radio. At this point we learn the: who, what, why and where of an event through quick but vague updates.

The next day, we see newspapers publish more in depth reports. These reports touch on the most current information available as well as provide background information about the event.

In the following week or weeks, popular and news magazines cover the aftermath and the impact on society and culture, as well as offer a detailed analysis on what happened.

As you may have noticed all of these formats are intended for a general audience.

It takes about six months to a year for the event to be addressed by the academic community in the form of academic journal articles. These articles are published in peer reviewed journals which means their credibility and accuracy is confirmed by the academic community. Scholarly articles provide a critical study of the event and bring in theory as well as empirical research to support their arguments.

Lastly, it is not for a year or even years after an event has occurred that we see both scholarly and popular books published. Although the intended audience may vary, books offer a comprehensive look at the event.

Within the same timeframe government reports such as public policy, legislation and statistical analysis are made available to the public.

The information cycle shows us that research is iterative. Information creation as a process means that the format, purpose and delivery of information are all intentional and informed by other formats.

So when looking for information to support your research think about when an event occurred, what type of information is available, what format supports your research and adjust your topic accordingly.