

Five Things to Consider before sharing an Academic Resource with Your Students

Save California Salmon

1. Whose Voices Are Included?

The presence of Indigenous voices is crucial to ensuring the credibility of a resource when discussing Indigenous history, land, issues, and knowledge. A well rounded academic resources will go beyond simply quoting Indigenous people by also having Indigenous peoples behind the creation of these resources. Implementing an Indigenous curriculum into your classroom involves highlighting Indigenous writers, academics, directors, and artists who are reclaiming their stories.

2. Publication Date

Taking into account the resources publication date will provide the historical context on the ideologies or political agendas that influence how information is presented. We know that who writes history also shapes history and Native American perspectives have been systematically excluded from historical documents. Teachers and Students will need to understand that historical documents can be representative of the beliefs during that time period and are not always true accounts of history.

3. Does This Resource Support Any Stereotypes?

Research can and has been used as a mechanism to oppress minority groups. One of the oppressive mechanisms of research is collecting data that supports or even creates stereotypes. A resource may be “well-cited” but if it is not uplifting the community that it is researching then it is likely to be harmful and should not be circulated. Before sharing an academic resource, teachers must understand how research can be a vehicle of oppression that can potentially bring harm to their students. Teachers who review a resource for possibly supporting a stereotype will ensure that students from all identities feel accurately represented in the classroom.

4. Who is the Author and What Topics do they Usually Publish On?

Before trusting an educational resource, do some research on the authors oeuvre - other literary works they have published. The author's oeuvre will determine if the topic is in their expertise or may identify their biases. For example, an author who has publications in support of oil companies might not be a credible source to cite about the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). We also encourage teachers to have their students get into the practice of researching an author's oeuvre because it is a good research skill to have. A trustworthy author will be someone who frequently publishes on topics related to the resource and does not have any identifiable alternative motives like the author in the example we provided. The author's oeuvre will help teachers and students identify the author's purpose which is the next and final point.

5. What is the Author's Purpose?

Authors always have an audience in mind and emotion or action they want to have inspired by their work. Depending on how the author analyzes their evidence there will be a different impact on the reader's interpretation. For example, if 10 separate authors wrote a report on honey bees using the same academic resources, the reader may draw different conclusions on the current state of honey bees from each author. In this example each author had a different intention that produced a different idea in the reader. No academic resource is without some bias and understanding an author's purpose helps to navigate these bias when choosing information to share with your class. We hope for teachers to lead by example by identifying how an author's purpose shapes how they present information so that students can become active learners.