

Tip #58 Why Johnnie and Janie can't search

"We're often told that young people tend to be the most tech-savvy among us. But just how savvy are they? A group of researchers led by College of Charleston business professor Bing Pan tried to find out. Specifically, Pan wanted to know how skillful young folks are at online search. His team gathered a group of college students and asked them to look up the answers to a handful of questions. Perhaps not surprisingly, the students generally relied on the web pages at the top of Google's results list... High school and college students may be "digital natives," but they're wretched at searching. In a recent experiment at Northwestern, when 102 undergraduates were asked to do some research online, none went to the trouble of checking the authors' credentials. In 1955, we wondered why Johnny can't read. Today the question is, why can't Johnny search?"

If you want to read more of this very relevant article about the value of information literacy instruction, which was in the November issue of "Wired Magazine" by Clive Thompson, please go to http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/11/st_thompson_searchresults/

You might want to try an exercise in the article: *"One can imagine even more entertaining ways to help kids grok the intricacies of the search world. Why not let students start a class blog on a subject and see how long it takes for it to show up in search results?"*

For a great checklist for evaluating the credibility of a webpage, send your students to <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webcrit.html>

For a great checklist for evaluating the credibility of books and journal articles, send your students to <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill26.htm>