The Information Cycle

What is the Information Cycle?

- The Information Cycle is the progression of media coverage of a newsworthy event over time
- Understanding how the Information Cycle progresses will let you know what kind of information is available at a particular point in time
- An “event” that begins an Information Cycle could be a: tsunami, election, just published research article, novel, new building, terrorist act, new technology, etc.
- Not all newsworthy events will complete an Information Cycle

Minutes after an event: Internet/Social Media

Information:
- Tends to be fragmented and very basic, describing what happened and who was involved
- Is continuously updated as new details become available
- May lack details, facts, and accuracy
- Is written by a mix of laypersons, bloggers, journalists, etc.

Examples: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram

Day/Days after an event: News Reports

Information:
- Contains more details about an event than earlier reports including quotes, statistics, interviews
- Is written by journalists, contributors, etc., and while often factual, may reflect editorial bias
- Does not include a reference list of sources, though may provide links to sources
- Is intended for a general audience

**Week/Weeks of an event: Magazines**

**Information:**
- Is more in-depth, and discusses the impact of an event on society, and public policy
- Is written by journalists, contributors, etc., and while often factual, may reflect editorial bias
- Does not include a reference list of sources, though may provide links to sources
- Is intended for a general audience

**Examples:** *Time, New York Magazine*

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**Months after an event: Scholarly Journals**

**Information:**
- Is written by people considered to be experts in the field: researchers, scientists, etc.
- Is often original research about an event, sometimes including empirical data
- Includes detailed analysis, and a full list of sources (bibliography)
- Is written for other researchers in the field and those interested in the topic at a research level

**Examples:** *Journal of Islamic Studies, Journal of Financial Economics*

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**Year/Years after an event: Books**

**Information:**
- Often expands analysis of an event using information found in journals, newspapers and magazines
- Will often place an event in an historical context
- Is written by a mix of professional and non-professional authors
- Will sometimes include in-text citation and a full list of sources

**Example:** “*Columbine: A True Crime Story*” by Jeff Kass (2013)

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**Year/Years after an event: Reference Sources**

**Information:**
- Is considered established knowledge
- May lack the details and specifics of earlier sources of information (e.g. journal articles)
- Provides summaries and overviews of the event, often with a list of sources
- Written for a general audience

**Examples:** *Encyclopedias, textbooks, dictionaries, handbooks*