AGENDA

• Data, statistics, information...what’s the difference?

• **Finding** statistics
• **Evaluating** statistics
• **Incorporating** statistics
• **Citing** statistics
“There are two kinds of statistics, the kind you look up, and the kind you make up.”

-Archie Goodwin in Death of a Doxy
FACT OR FICTION?

“The recent financial crisis will push up to 100 million people in developing countries into absolute poverty.”
DATA, STATISTICS, INFORMATION

Data: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Statistics: 5.333333

Information: Average age of a child in daycare is 5.
Data is converted to statistics to communicate information.
ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0ZZJXw4MTA
Canadian development assistance:
4.1:
  a) “contributes to poverty reduction;
  b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and
  c) is consistent with international human rights standards.”

“We are looking for health statistics to prove that…”

**VERSUS**

“We are looking for health statistics.”
FINDING STATISTICS

• What will you need?
  • Audience
  • Message
  • Goals

• How will you find it?
  • Search?
  • Browse?

• Be sure you are looking for your statistics in context
• Where will you find it?
FINDING STATISTICS

- Eldis
- WHO
- OECD iLibrary
- UNDP
- World Bank
- UN Data
- Statistics Canada
- FNIGC
- Canadian Research Data Centre Network
FINDING STATISTICS

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
- Survey on Aboriginal Peoples (Stats Canada)
- Amnesty International
- EITI
- ILO
- Transparency International
- CIA World Factbook
- UNICEF
- World Audit
- UNHCR
FINDING STATISTICS

• Other...?
EVALUATING STATISTICS

• Speculative statistics
• Common misuse of statistics (See Bolton)
  • No context (or lack of context)
  • False comparisons
  • “Cherry-picking”
  • Use of charts, graphics, sample surveys
  • Ambiguity
  • Use of averages
  • Rounding
EVALUATING STATISTICS: THE CHECKLIST

- Who ran the study/collection of the data?
- Why does the study/statistic exist?
- What is the claim?
- How good is the evidence/how was it collected?
  - Methodology?
  - Which questions were asked?
  - Was there a study group? How was the population determined? Was there a control group?
- What is the context?

***Beware of comparative statistics/data – they often don’t measure the same thing or have not been collected/derived in the same way!***

*See Battersby, chapter 11.*
INCORPORATING STATISTICS

• Use sparingly
  • Make it relevant
  • Consider your audience
  • Use appropriate language – clear, easy to understand
  • Pay attention to sentence structure, length, etc.
CITING STATISTICS

- Citing Statistics Canada Data
- Guide to Citing Data/Statistics (Map and Data Library)
- Citation Help (Ethics, Society, and Law research guide)
FACT OR FICTION?

“The recent financial crisis will push up to 100 million people in developing countries into absolute poverty.”
GETTING HELP

- University of Toronto Libraries
- Research Guides
  - Ethics, Society, and Law
  - Data Research Guides
- Me – your subject librarian!
  - Appointment services
  - Drop-in services
  - Email
  - Chat
RESOURCES


“Statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read or write.”

-H.G. Wells
THANK YOU!

Questions?

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