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and
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a
GRAPHIC
guide to
STUDENT
RESEARCH

Information Now

A Graphic Guide to Student Research

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PREFACE

This book has pictures, we swear! You just have to get past this enormous one-page chunk of text before you are rewarded with the ample fruits of your labor. OK, OK, take one quick sneak peek. Turn the page but come right back.

Great. Satisfied? Since we've got you here, there are two important items we want to address.

#1: This book is about information. How to find the right kind, how to use it effectively, how to evaluate it efficiently, etc. As a current or perhaps soon-to-be undergraduate, the information you use—and your understanding of it—is critical to your success as a student and as a future professional. We want this book to reinvent the way you think about information. We want you to be more critical of the information you find and use. We want you to have a better understanding of where the information you use comes from. We want you to be more aware of how to locate the best information for your needs. And we want you to realize that finding the best information can be hard work, *especially* now that there is more information being created by more people than ever before in human history. We want you to do a lot of things, but we're here to help. And when I say "we," I mean librarians. Obviously we're a little biased here, but librarians are one of the most important resources in your quest for information. We know our way around books. That's been our job for quite a while now. But more importantly, we're *information experts*. Books aren't our only tools; we're not limited to one medium. We know how to find stuff, and, more importantly, we can help you figure out how to find the right stuff on your own. So, if this book teaches you one thing (hopefully, it will teach you more, but . . .), it's that your friendly neighborhood librarian can and should be one of your first stops when you start researching. OK, enough self-promotion.

#2: We decided to make this book a comic because we believe that comics can more efficiently teach concepts and skills than traditional prose, thanks to their use of engaging combinations of text and images and appropriate utilization of metaphor and relevant context. Because comics stimulate the parts of your brain that handle visual elements as well as the parts that handle language, they can potentially give your brain more opportunities to connect with the content than you'd have with a strictly text-based book. Plus, comics are fun to write and draw and a *lot* more fun to read than your average textbook.

All right, we've said enough here. Read the book, learn something new, and enjoy!

INTRODUCTION

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

OH, HI!
YOU LOOK A
LITTLE LOST.
HOW CAN I
HELP?

AH, A RESEARCH
PROJECT, HUH? AND YOU
DON'T KNOW WHERE TO
START? SURE, WE CAN
HELP WITH THAT!

UH-HUH, RIGHT, RIGHT.
OK. SO, YOU'VE SEARCHED
ONLINE AND WERE SWAMPED
WITH RESOURCES? DON'T
KNOW WHAT TO USE?

SOUNDS LIKE WE
NEED TO START WITH
THE BASICS. LET'S
TALK ABOUT...



INFORMATION

OVERLOAD

SO, YOU'RE PROBABLY ASKING YOURSELF, "WHY AM I IN A LIBRARY? WHY CAN'T I JUST GOOGLE ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING I NEED FOR THIS PROJECT?"



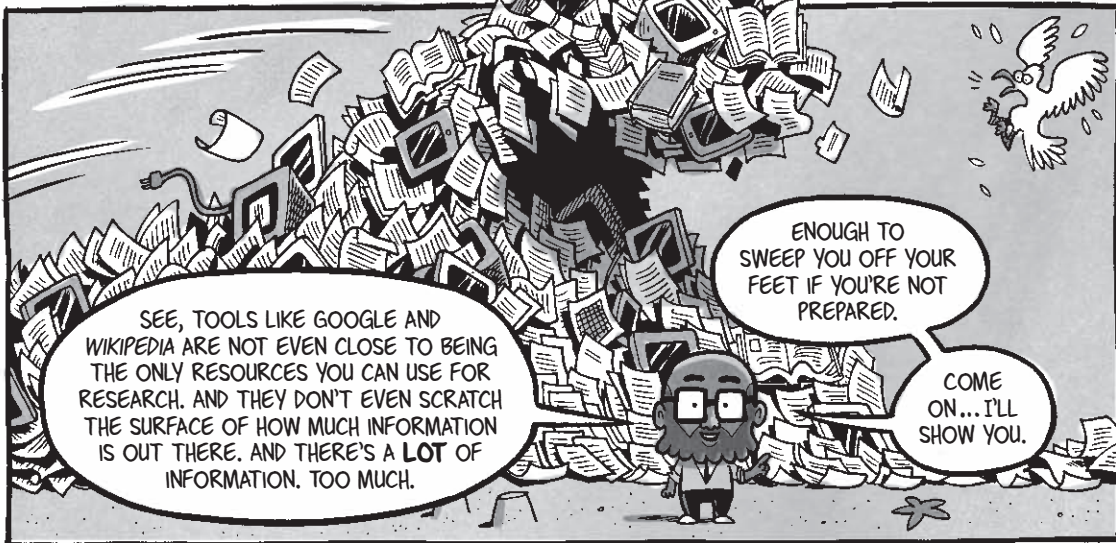
YEAH, GOOD QUESTION!

WELL, I'M GLAD YOU ASKED, BECAUSE I HAVE A WHOLE LOT OF ANSWERS. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, GOOGLE CAN BE A GREAT RESOURCE. SO CAN WIKIPEDIA. IN FACT, ANY PIECE OF INFORMATION HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE USEFUL, REGARDLESS OF WHERE YOU FIND IT...



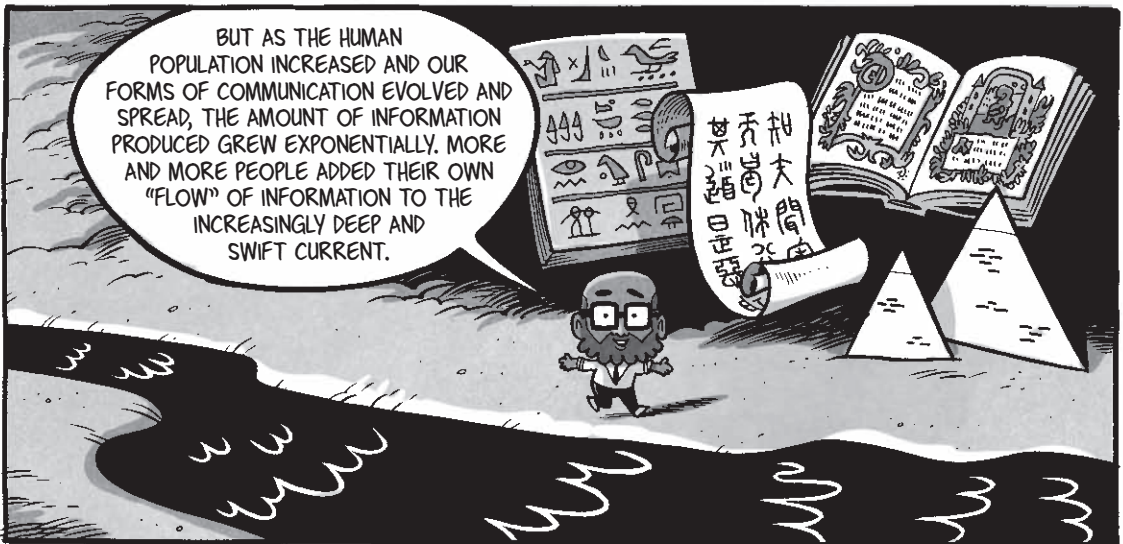
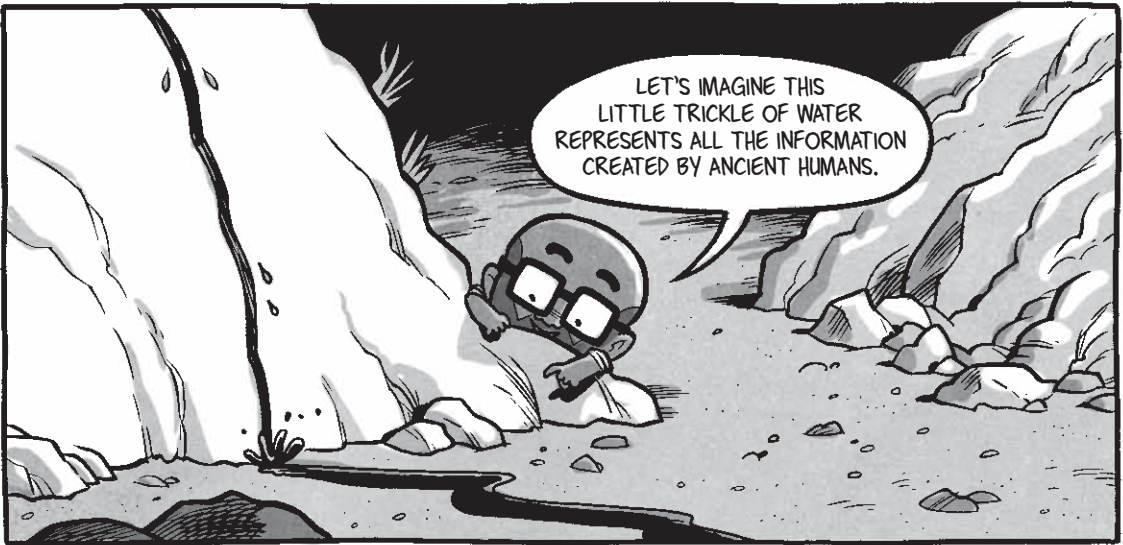
...BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF.

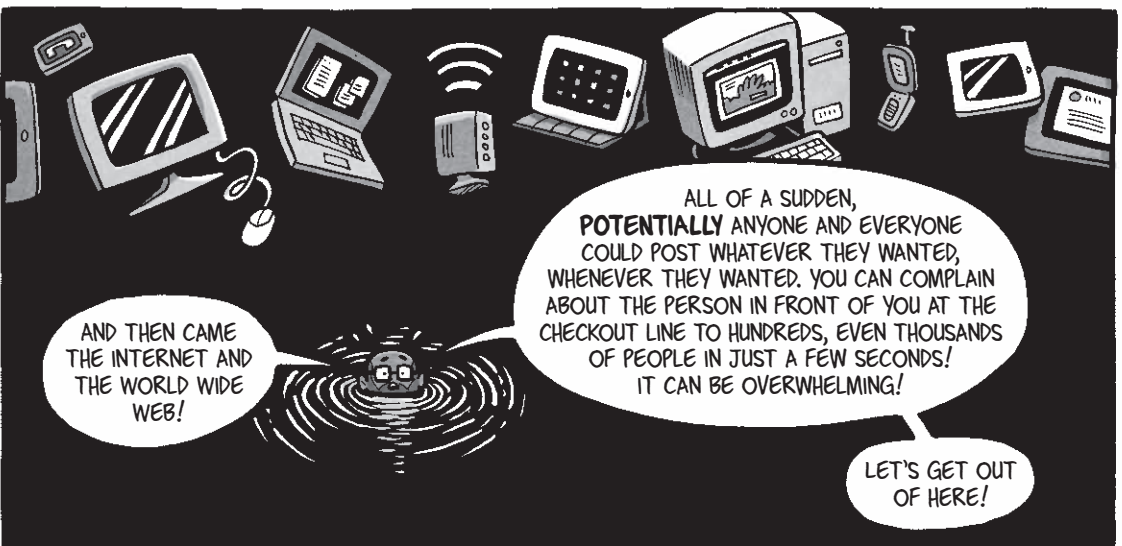
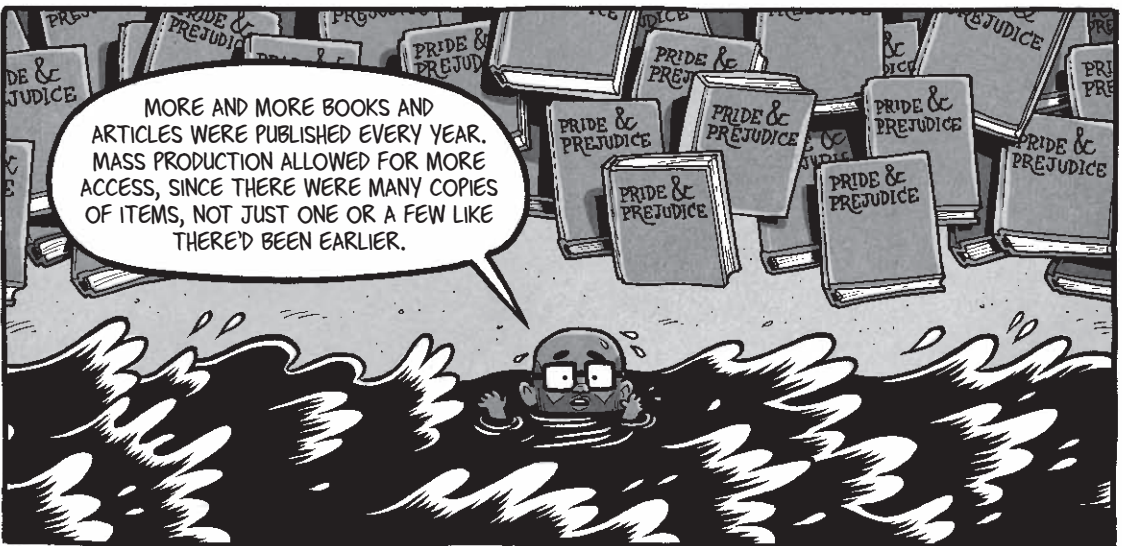
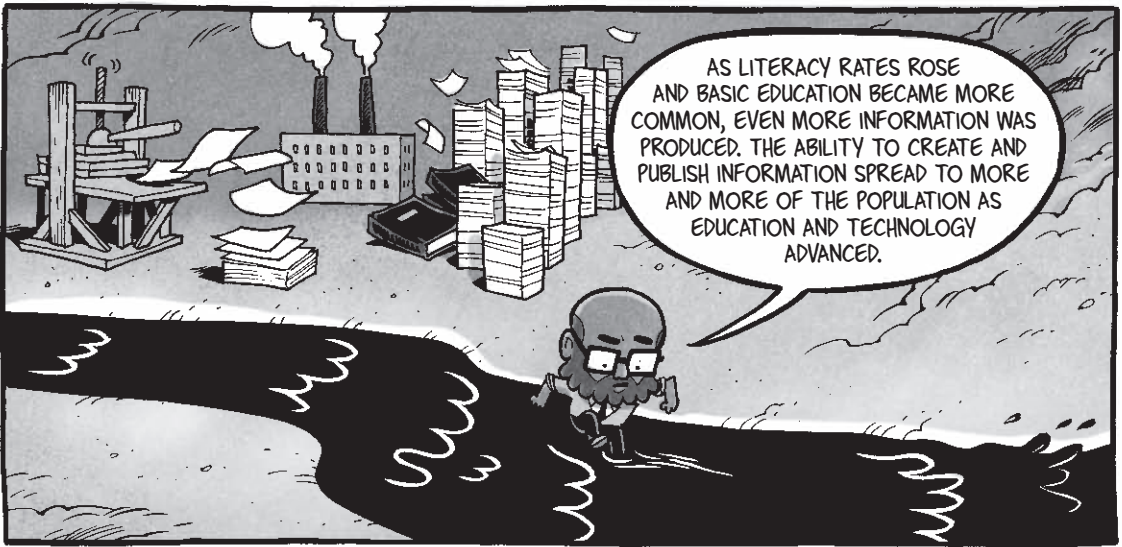
SEE, TOOLS LIKE GOOGLE AND WIKIPEDIA ARE NOT EVEN CLOSE TO BEING THE ONLY RESOURCES YOU CAN USE FOR RESEARCH. AND THEY DON'T EVEN SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF HOW MUCH INFORMATION IS OUT THERE. AND THERE'S A LOT OF INFORMATION. TOO MUCH.

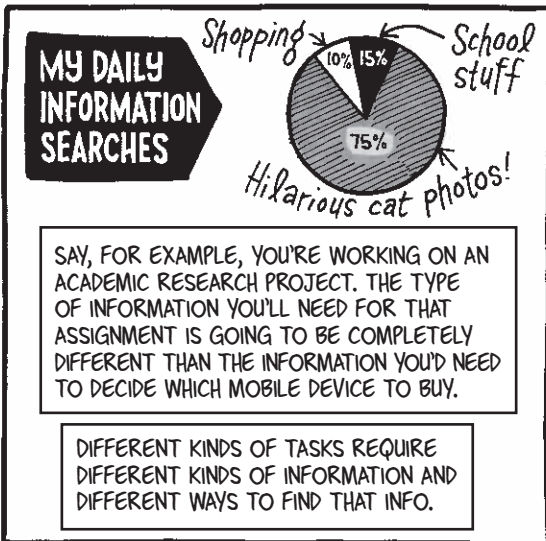
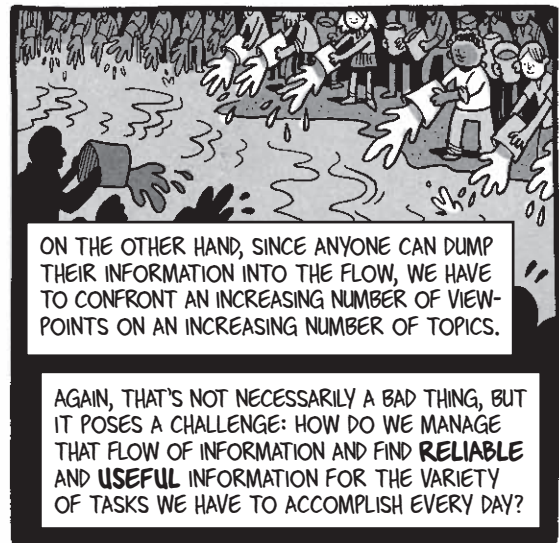
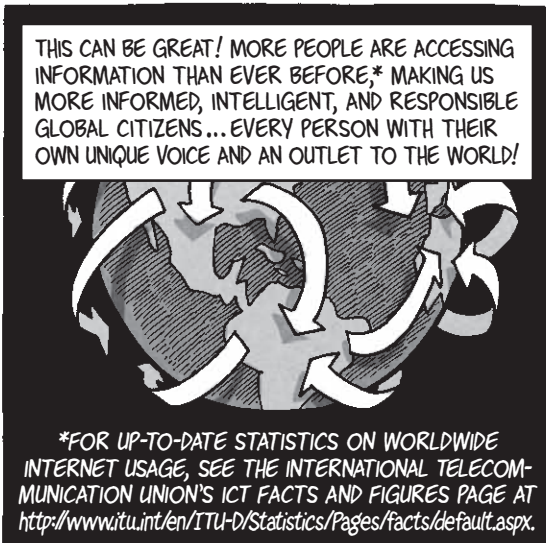
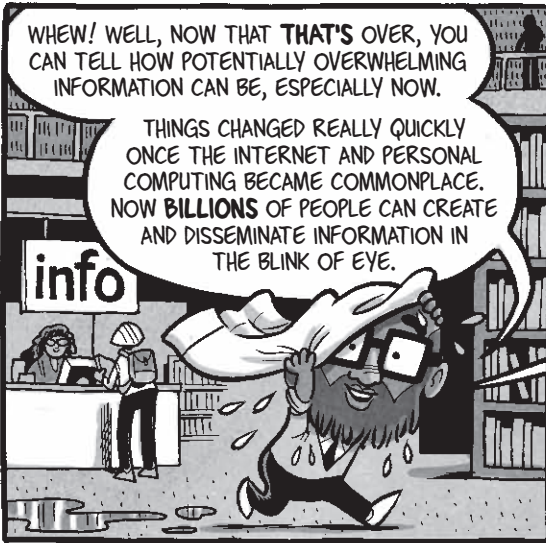


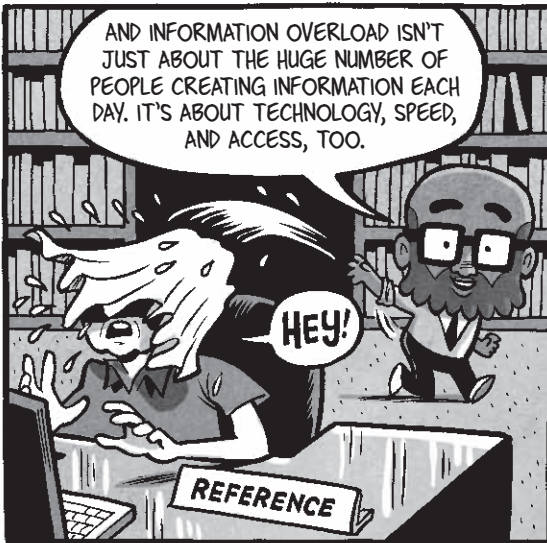
ENOUGH TO SWEEP YOU OFF YOUR FEET IF YOU'RE NOT PREPARED.

COME ON... I'LL SHOW YOU.





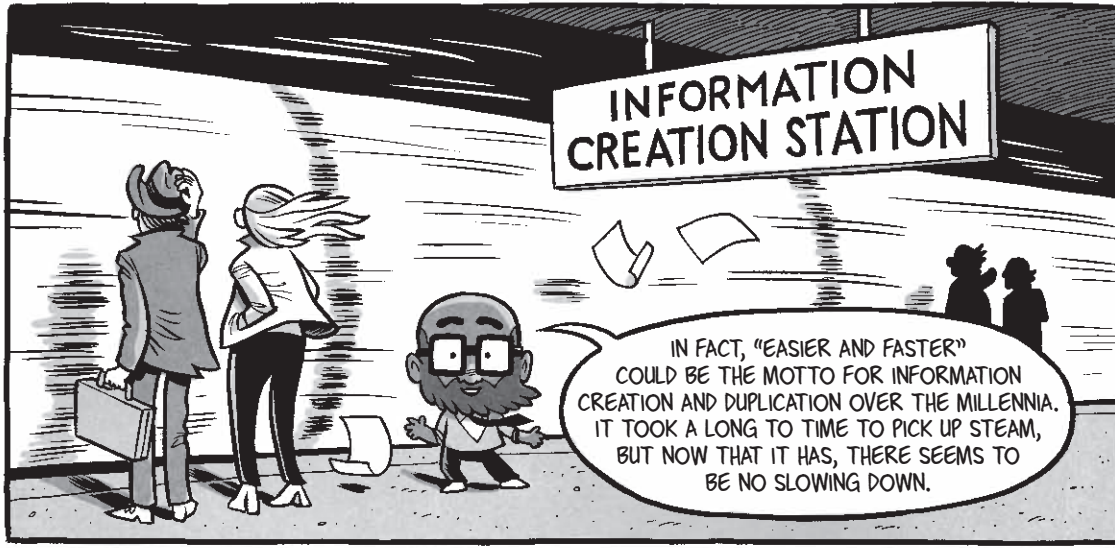
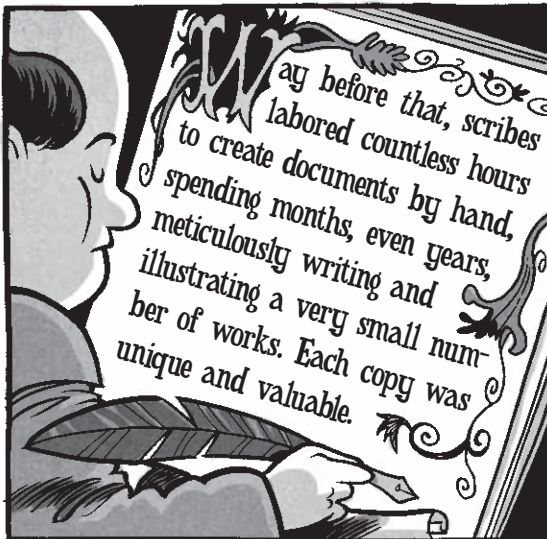




NOWADAYS, IT IS INCREDIBLY EASY FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO CREATE AND DUPLICATE INFORMATION.

create and duplicate information!
 create and duplicate information
 create and duplicate information
 create and duplicate information

WAY BACK IN ANCIENT TIMES, STUDENTS WERE FORCED TO USE A CONTRAPTION KNOWN AS A TYPEWRITER, OR EVEN—GASP!—WRITE THINGS OUT BY HAND. (THEY HAD TO KNOW HOW TO SPELL, TOO.) CREATING JUST ONE COPY TOOK A LOT OF WORK.



THERE ARE ALSO MORE WAYS TO ACCESS INFORMATION THAN THERE USED TO BE.

WE USED TO HAVE TO GO TO THE INFORMATION IN MANY CASES.



NOW, MORE THAN EVER, THE INFORMATION COMES TO US.

THE WIDE ARRAY OF TECHNOLOGY WE HAVE AT OUR DISPOSAL ENSURES THAT WE'RE NEVER MORE THAN A FEW SECONDS AWAY FROM DISCOVERING SOMETHING.



IT CAN BE TOO MUCH: TOO MANY WAYS FOR INFORMATION TO REACH US AND NOT ENOUGH WAYS TO FILTER OUT WHAT WE DON'T WANT.

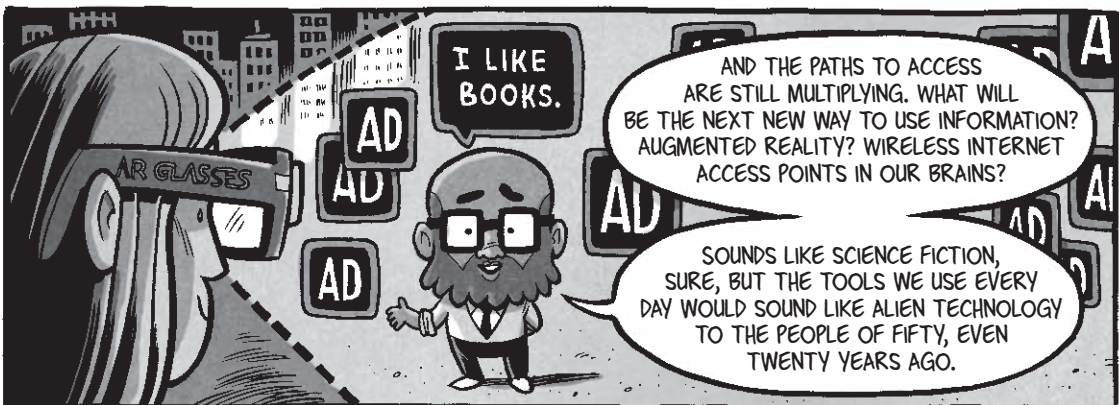
MANAGING ALL OF THE INFORMATION THAT WE COME ACROSS CAN BE A CHALLENGE BECAUSE WE ENCOUNTER SO MUCH OF IT IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.

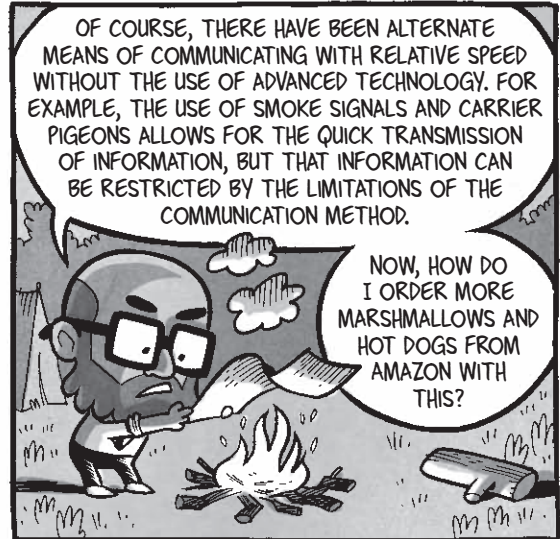
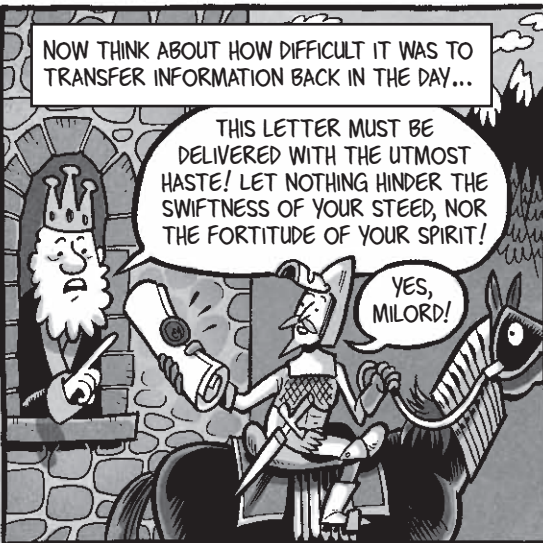


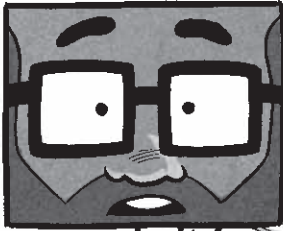
I LIKE BOOKS.

AND THE PATHS TO ACCESS ARE STILL MULTIPLYING. WHAT WILL BE THE NEXT NEW WAY TO USE INFORMATION? AUGMENTED REALITY? WIRELESS INTERNET ACCESS POINTS IN OUR BRAINS?

SOUNDS LIKE SCIENCE FICTION, SURE, BUT THE TOOLS WE USE EVERY DAY WOULD SOUND LIKE ALIEN TECHNOLOGY TO THE PEOPLE OF FIFTY, EVEN TWENTY YEARS AGO.



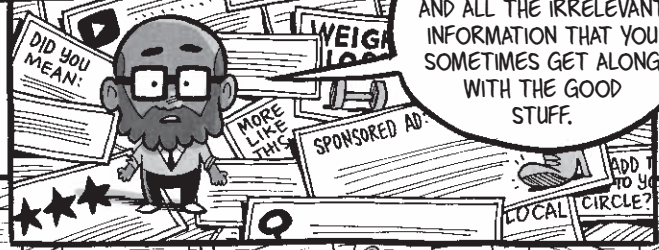




SINCE INFORMATION IS NO LONGER DIFFICULT TO TRANSMIT, WE DON'T WORRY AS MUCH ABOUT WHAT WE'RE SENDING OUT INTO THE WORLD. QUALITY, RELEVANCE, AND RELIABILITY AREN'T AS VALUED AS THEY USED TO BE, DEPENDING ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW.



THINK ABOUT ALL THE JUNK E-MAILS YOU GET, ALL THE AD BLASTS THAT SCREAM OUT TO YOU FROM EVERY OTHER WEBSITE YOU VISIT.



THINK ABOUT ALL THE GOOGLE SEARCHES YOU DO AND ALL THE IRRELEVANT INFORMATION THAT YOU SOMETIMES GET ALONG WITH THE GOOD STUFF.



INFORMATION IS NO LONGER A SCARCE COMMODITY. IT'S BEYOND ABUNDANT, INCREASING AT A RATE THAT IS UNFATHOMABLE.

HOW DO YOU KEEP UP? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S RELEVANT AND ACCURATE? HOW DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW? WHAT INFORMATION HAS BEEN VERIFIED BY EXPERTS AS RELIABLE AND UNBIASED? WHAT WAS CONCOCTED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO INTEREST IN PROVIDING A TRUTHFUL LOOK AT THE WORLD? WHAT'S THERE JUST TO MAKE MONEY OR ENTERTAIN? HOW DO YOU DECIDE?

WELL, BEING **INFORMATION LITERATE** IS A WAY TO COMBAT THE CONFUSION. BASICALLY, IT'S ALL ABOUT UNDERSTANDING HOW TO FIND, USE, CREATE, AND SHARE INFORMATION IN A VARIETY OF DYNAMIC SCENARIOS, INCLUDING ACADEMIC RESEARCH.

LET'S DIG IN.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES

1. For the exercises in this book, create an online blog, website, Twitter feed (or any other type of online social media) that you can use to track your understanding of information literacy and the research process. Feel free to answer the questions by using text, images, video, sound, or any other approach, **BUT** be sure to use outside information ethically. (I know we haven't covered that yet, but for now, just be sure to let us know if you use information created by someone else and show us where you got it. When in doubt, **LINK**.) This can be formal or informal, but you should really focus on answering the questions honestly and thinking about your own understanding and experience finding and using information.
2. Have you ever experienced information overload when searching for information? Were you unable to make a decision because there was too much information or the information was inconsistent or conflicted? If so, think about and describe how you got into that mess in the first place. What kind of information were you looking for? How much time did you spend trying to find what you needed? Were you eventually successful, or did you give up and throw your computer in the trash? Can you think of any strategies you could have used to avoid the problem?
3. Is information overload a common problem for you, or are you confident in your ability to find and manage information?
4. If you are confident in your skills, explain why. Practice? Instinct? Luck? What makes your search skills so great? If you're not confident, how could you fix that?