Information Cycle – HOW INFORMATION EVOLVES

The information cycle describes how information about an event evolves over time. Having knowledge of this cycle will give you a better understanding of the different publication sources that will be found during your research and the advantages and limitations of those sources. Using these sources appropriately in your research paper is essential to writing a successful research paper.

Minutes

Radio • Television • Internet

Our current technology allows us to relay information about events within minutes of its occurrence. Since the information is being reported quickly it is often basic with little analysis and can occasionally be inaccurate.

Days

Newspapers

Newspapers publish articles about current events in the days following the occurrence. These articles are usually written by journalists who will investigate an event by collecting facts, quoting officials, and reviewing records to provide a more detailed description that pieces together the event and the reasons for its occurrence.

Weeks

Popular Magazines

After a few weeks, magazines will publish longer articles about an event. These articles build upon information gathered by newspapers and begin offering conjectures for their impact on society. Magazine articles often include interviews and expert testimony.

Months

Academic Journals

Scholars and researchers will develop theories and conduct research to explain the reasons, consequences and/or future implications of an event. Six or more months after the event, scholarly articles will be published in academic journals describing and explaining the results of these inquiries.

Years

Books • Reports

As years pass, writers will start publishing books that will put the event in context. These books will often tie together documents and published information about the event and begin to construct an overall picture. Some books will take an in depth look focusing on a narrow aspect. Authors can range from hobbyists to scholars.