# Activity: Backtracking from newspaper articles to original research articles

## Purpose:

Students work in pairs ad use a newspaper article to backtrack to the original research article using the library search and databases.

## Learning outcome:

**Authority is constructed and contextual**

**Information creation is a process**

**Searching as Strategic Exploration**

* recognize that information may be perceived differently based on the format in which it is packaged
* Assess the fit between a source’s creation process and the particular information need
* Assess the fit between a source’s argument, methodology, and authority and the particular information need
* Use research tools and indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility

Suggestions for use: The genesis of this activity was a class about why people do or do not believe scientific conclusions. Mechanically, it can be used to help students practice moving from information “in the wild” as reported by the media to the original research articles. Conceptually, it can be used to help students evaluate how well or poorly scholarly research is reported by the press and to understand that different formats are useful at different times, and that different types of authority (reporter vs researchers) are constructed and contextual.)

## Materials:

* Newspaper articles related to the topic of the class, printed out, that draw from original research. Ideally, each article will be used by 2 to 3 pairs of students. Newspaper articles work best if there is a range of accurate to inaccurate reporting, and if students can find enough clues about the original research paper to be able to find it on the library catalog/databases.
* Laptop computers, one per student ideally, with access to the web
* Powerpoint (attached to this assignment)
* “Cheat sheet” for librarian w/ citations for the correct research articles that the students are trying to find

## Time: 25-35minutes

## How-To:

Explain the activity to the students and explain/demo how to go from newspaper article to research article with demonstration article. Students then pair up and receive an article to work with. Librarian and professor circle room and assist groups that need assistance, but I suggest allowing students some productive struggle. After 20 minutes or so, most of the pair should have found the original research article for their news article. Have the students spend a little time scanning the research article and then have all pairs report out to the class:

1. Did they find the article? (Have students give the title of the research article and check it against your cheat sheet.)
2. In their opinion, did the newspaper article represent the findings of the research article well or poorly?
3. When might they use the newspaper article? When might they use the research article?

From here, I talk about online fact checking a la Mike Caulfield, but other activities or lecture can be swapped in.