Go Upstream to the Source

Learning Objectives:

- Students will use online search techniques to locate the original sources of statistics, photos, and facts used in a news story.
- Students will evaluate the context of the original information and how it is reflected in subsequent news stories.

The second technique is to go upstream to the source. That is, find the original report, photo, or statistic cited in a story and evaluate it. Is the source reputable? Is the information taken out of context? Are the researchers qualified? This technique can be incorporated into a discussion on evaluation methods—such as determining authority—or when teaching online search techniques.

The example below is from a Fox News tweet citing a Bank of America study. Their headline states that 1 in 6 millennials say they have $100,000 or more in savings.

As in checking for previous work, there are some simple search techniques to go upstream to the source. By highlighting a relevant portion of the text then right-clicking the mouse (control-click on a Mac), you’re given the option to search Google for that phrase.
Use the right-click technique on photos as well. As with text, it will search the web for other instances of the photo. This reverse image search also works on charts and graphs.

If you have time, you can distribute examples of fake and real news and have students go through this process themselves. Good sources of fake news examples are the Four Moves blog and Snopes:

- [https://fourmoves.blog/](https://fourmoves.blog/)
- [https://www.snopes.com/](https://www.snopes.com/)

Ask students to contrast the original information with its presentation in subsequent news stories. Are the facts and the context accurately portrayed? If not, how were they changed and why?