



Be Media Savvy

It's More Important Than Ever

Jan Leach

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Why Do We Care?

- Democratic process relies on an informed citizenry
- Public trust in government remains near historic lows

Only 20% of Americans today say they can trust the government to do what is right “just about always”

Trust in government is higher among members of the party that controls the presidency

Trust in government remains near historically low levels across generational lines

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State of Democracy

- Warning signs for America
- Alarm about threats to Democratic process
- Six areas that present warning signs of democratic decline

Leaders' treatment of media

Effective constraints of the executive against abuses of power

Respect for free and fair elections

Civil liberties (speech, assembly, religion, privacy)

Use of violence

Rhetoric

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State of Democracy

- Current level of threat to democracy
- Majority of 68 experts polled (in May – after FBI director fired) rate U.S. as “outside the norm for a consolidated democracy” on every dimension except use of violence
- Political rhetoric and constraints on executive power rated as showing *significant* erosion of democracy
- Greatest threat is anti-democratic rhetoric
- Concerns about aggressive treatment of media; this also mostly rhetorical

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Which Brings Us To...

Polarization in How People View Media

- Republicans and Trump supporters see the press as “enemy of the American people”
- Democrats see surge in trust and confidence in the press

The Press and the President: Trust and the Media in a New Era

The Poynter Journalism Ethics Summit

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The Good News

- The public supports the press, but weakly
- Exposure to anti-media messages, including derision of actual news as “fake news,” has relatively limited effect on attitudes toward the press

The Press and the President: Trust and the Media in a New Era

The Poynter Journalism Ethics Summit

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The Bad

- Republicans have more negative attitudes toward the press than Democrats
- Republicans are more likely to endorse claims of media fabrication, describe journalists as enemies of the people, support restrictions on press freedom
- Almost half of all Americans believe the news media fabricate stories about Trump, including 77% of Trump approvers and 74% of Republicans
- 31% of all Americans agree with claim that the media are “the enemy of the American people” and 31% also agree that the media “keep political leaders from doing their job”

The Press and the President: Trust and the Media in a New Era

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Media Help Citizens in a Democracy

- “Despite mass media’s propensity for sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, the notion of the media as watchdog, as guardian of the public interest, and as a conduit between governors and the governed remains deeply ingrained.”

Sheila S. Coronel, Columbia University

- What can the media do when they are regarded as

FAKE NEWS?

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Fake or Fact?

Two current uses of the term

1.

- Intentionally deceptive news and information
- Can be proven untrue
 - Misinformation/slanted or selective facts
 - Disinformation/propaganda
 - Large-scale hoaxes
 - Jokes/satire

NOTE: Dictionary.com adding entry for “fake news”

- “False stories, often of a sensational nature, created to be widely shared online for the purpose of generating ad revenue via web traffic or discrediting a public figure, political movement, company, etc.” (Sept. 27, 2017)

Dictionary.com

University of Western Ontario

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Fake or Fact?

Two current uses of the term

2.*

- Tag given to (usually MSM) stories to discredit them
- Purposeful attempt to shape or sway public opinion about information and/or sources
- Label leveled at (usually MSM) to escape debate or accountability

Purposely undermines the media (and, by extension) the First Amendment, democracy

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Fake or Fact?

Second use of the term (*)

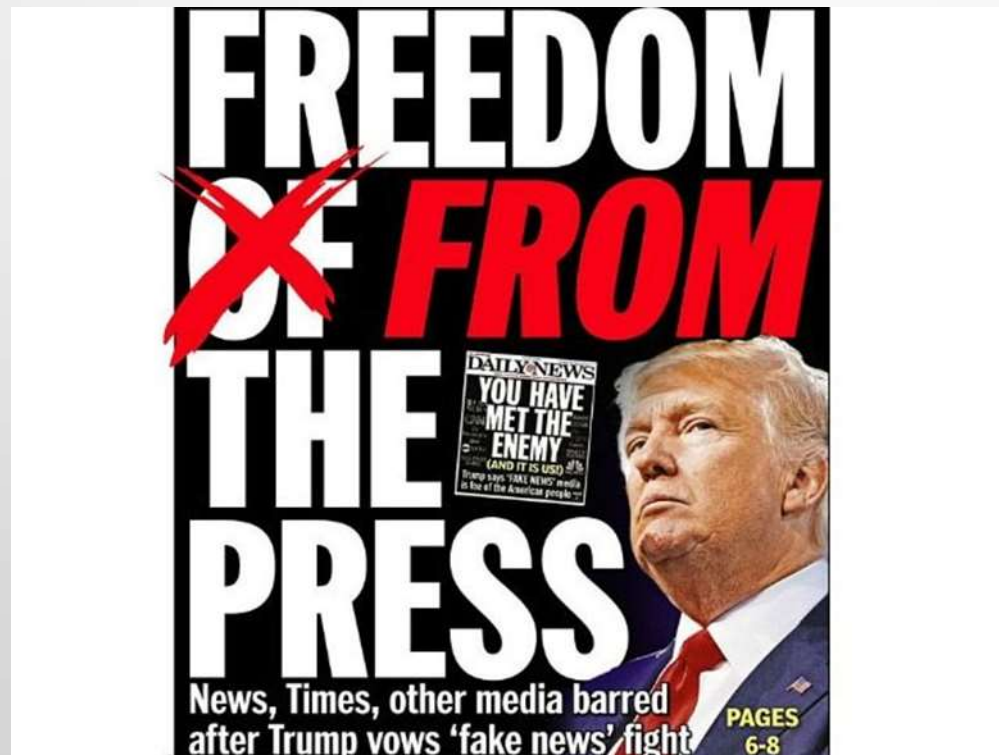
- Purposeful attempt to shape or sway public opinion about information and/or sources
- Purposely undermines the media

*NOTE: A new analysis in CJR says “the volume of reporting around fake news, and the role of tech companies in disseminating those falsehoods, is both disproportionate to its likely influence in the outcome of the election and diverts attention from the culpability of the mainstream media itself.”

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Fake or Fact?

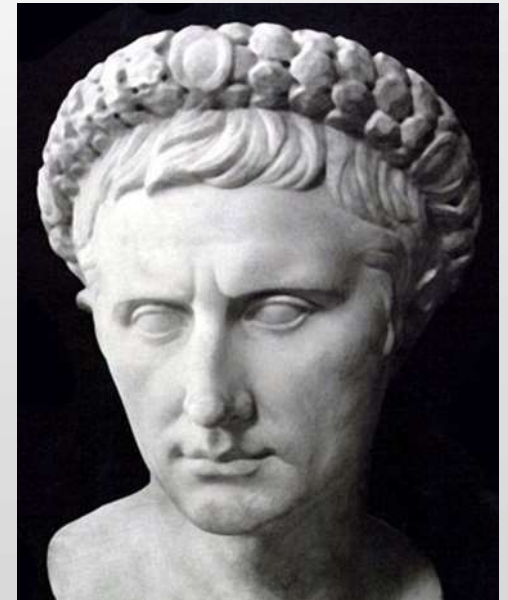
Fake news is **not** news you don't agree with



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Fake news is not new

- Byzantine historian in 6th century AD churned out dubious info to smear reputation of Emperor Justinian
- Italian author, satirist tried to manipulate pontifical election of 1522 by writing wicked sonnets
- In 1772, a newspaper suggested Marie-Antoinette had lovers
- Octavian used disinformation in final war with Roman Republic. After, changed name to Augustus and sent out youthful images of himself



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Fake News

Why should we care?

(About actual fake news, not fake news labels)

- Stanford study(Nov. 2016) shows students from middle school through college have difficulty separating paid advertising from news and **overlook evidence of bias in claims they encounter**, especially online.

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Fake News

- Media literacy
- News literacy
- Helps judge reliability, credibility of information whether print, tv or Internet
- Important skill in digital age
- Truth essential to democratic process, because democracy depends on informed citizenry

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Infobesity

- Deluge of info leads to daily “bombing” of the human brain with so much information it would overload a powerful computer
- 105,000 words in 12 waking hours
- Infobesity makes people feel frustrated, unwell

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Fake News, Post-Truth, Alternative Facts & more

- Post-truth
 - Circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.
 - *'In this era of post-truth politics, it's easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire'*



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Fake News, Post-Truth, Alternative Facts & more

- Alternative facts
 - Additional facts and alternative information
 - Possibly coined by ghostwriter Tony Schwartz who claims he coined the term and that Trump “loved it.”



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Fake News, Post-Truth, Alternative Facts & more

- Disinformation

- Information that is *intended to mislead*, especially propaganda issued by a govt. organization to a rival power or the media
- Propaganda
- To be effective, disinformation must have element of truth or plausibility
- Circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief

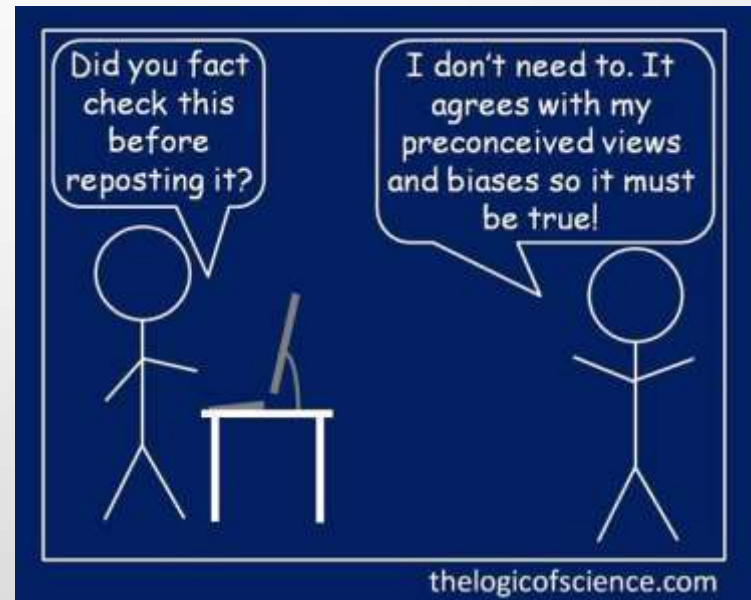


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Fake News

Craig Silverman, BuzzFeed research

- Humans love to hear things that confirm what we think
- Makes us feel good to get information that aligns with what we already believe, feel
- Confirmation bias

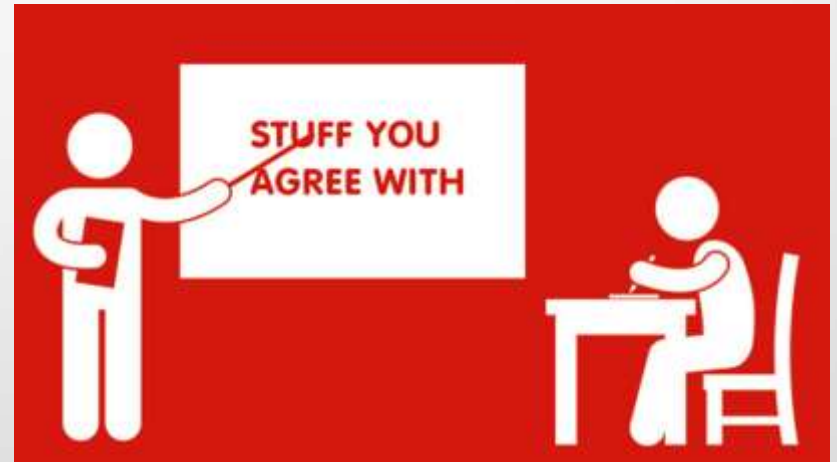


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Fake News

BuzzFeed research

- When confronted with information that contradicts what we think and feel, human reaction is NOT to consider it
- Reaction is to double-down on existing beliefs
- Look for things that confirm what we want them to confirm



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Fake News

BuzzFeed research

- Emotion also comes into equation
- Anger, fear, joy, hate, surprise
- Fake news producers combine information that aligns with people's beliefs and strikes at people's emotions;
fake news takes off



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Fake News

- On Facebook, and other social media, the more you interact with content, the more algorithms are going to give you more of that content
- You see it, you share it and FB gives you more of it

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Fake News

BuzzFeed research

- Debunking fake news is actively going against information that people are willing to/want to believe
- Debunking fake news goes against what people like emotionally
- If people learn the thing they liked, saw or shared is not true they get defensive, they disagree or they label the messenger as biased

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What to do?

- News

- Pay attention to the publication name, domain name and url
 - EX: News sites have standard look but fake sites mimic this look
 - EX: endings like .com.co
 - EX: abc.com.co taken down as of Oct. 30, 2017, had been registered to same address as Westboro Baptist Church
 - Bloomberg.ma (mimics Bloomberg.com), nbc.com.co; usatoday.com.com; washingtonpost.com.co
 - EX: names like American News, Beforeit'snews (suspect videos), Denver Guardian (no such thing; only one Hillary Clinton story under news 3 days before election), Stupid
 - EX: Satirical sites: "The Onion"
 - EX: Well-known ideological sites: Breitbart, InfoWars



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What to do?

- News

- Read the “About Us” section of websites

Most actual news sites have lots of information about the organization, ownership, contact info, even mission statements and ethics policies

-- EX: Melodramatic or fake sites overblown

Should be able to look up information about an organization or its leaders elsewhere

-- EX: Whois.com (lookup)

-- EX: Martinlutherking.org belongs to KKK grand wizard Don Black and is spinoff of Stormfront.org, white nationalist online community



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What to do?

- News
 - Who said the quotes?
 - Is it a reputable source
 - Verify in Google search or Google Scholar
 - If speech, where, when and to whom?
 - Who else is reporting it?

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What to do?

- News

- Look for quotes; look for lack of quotes

Most media use multiples sources who are professionals or experts

Serious, controversial stories lots of sources

EX: Cameron Harris, ChristianTimesNewspaper.com invented source "Randall Prince," Columbus-area electrical worker and made up quotes

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What to do?

- News

- Check the comments

Headlines written to exaggerate a point or mislead might be attached to stories about different subject

These often generate lots of comments

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What to do?

- Photos, visuals
 - Reverse image search
 - Similar images
 - Sites that include the image
 - Search w/any browser, tablet, phone
 - Google Image Search, TinEye, Yandex
 - Check the date



EX: Deformed daisies grow near site of Fukushima nuclear plant disaster. But, daisies & other plants often show fasciation/hormonal imbalance and can occur anywhere

EX: Photo posted to Imgur, photo sharing site, no date, source

Of 170 h.s. students, 40% argued that post provided strong evidence of conditions near Fukushima power plant because it presented pictorial evidence

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What to do?

- Photos, visuals
- Photoshop



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What to do?

- Photos, visuals
- Photoshop



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What to do?

- Photos, visuals
- Photoshop



Jason Michael
@Jeggit

 Follow

Believe it or not, this is a shark on the freeway in Houston, Texas. #HurricaneHarvy

2:00 AM - Aug 28, 2017

 6,497  77,884  124,972

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What to do?

Tweets

- Simitator.com, Tweeterino, Tweetfake.com
- Check for verified symbol
(But these are not always 100% accurate)
- Check when account was created
- Check account's Tweet history (#FirstTweet & account name)



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What to do?

- General Tips

- Consider the source
- Check the author
- Is it a joke?
- Ask the experts
- Check your biases
- Is it click bait?
- Watch for unusual formatting (misspellings, etc.)
- Twitter bots based on AI mimic tweets by real people

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- Combat fake news

- Take responsibility for spread of fake news
- Recognize speed vs. accuracy problems w/online, digital, social media
- Be skeptical

- Invest in many news sources
- Ask good questions
- Do not share fake news on purpose
- Can you tell if it's satire?
- Check your own bias

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References

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NPR PBS Newshour
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Pew Research Center
Politico
The Poynter Institute
Stanford History Education Group
The Telegraph
University of Western Ontario
The Washington Post
YouGov