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You Deserve the Truth: Helping students understand the causes and consequences of fake news

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You Deserve the Truth:
Helping Students Understand the Causes and Consequences of Fake News

Ngaire Smith, Haywood Community College - Clyde, NC
Heather Cyre, University of Washington Bothell - Bothell, WA
Before We Begin...

**ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY START A PRESENTATION**

**WITHOUT AN ICE BREAKER**
Librarians: Guarding against Fake News, Conspiracy Theories, and other Stupid Stuff

• Guarding against the spread of false and inflammatory information is a core principle of librarianship
• Our mission is to gather and make available the best information. If we do not teach our students how to identify good information, we are failing.
Students: Fake News and Vulnerability

- Experience news without traditional gatekeepers
  - Social media
    - encourage sharing without reading
  - Clickbait headlines
  - Accustomed to skimming and clicking
  - Many embrace news if it aligns with their beliefs

- Unique stage of life
  - Voting
  - Employment
  - Housing communities
  - Encountering diverse populations
Fake News Workshop

Formatted for 90 minutes. Additional activities listed at the end of this presentation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Learning Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identify</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Create</strong></td>
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Activity 1: Fake News Examples

- Write a definition of fake news
- Think of one example
  - How did you find out about this example?
  - How did you know it was fake?
- What is fake news not?
Fake News Definition

Fake news is information that is clearly and demonstrably fabricated and that has been packaged and distributed to appear as legitimate news.

This narrow definition seeks to distinguish fake news from other types of misleading information by clarifying that the former is patently false and was created and presented in a way meant to deceive consumers into thinking it is real.

Fake news refers to a specific piece of information; it does not refer to any particular type of news outlet, individual, or other actor.

https://www.mediamatters.org/research/2016/12/15/understanding-fake-news-universe/214819
More broadly: 
Fake news has proliferated to the point where one definition does not cover its many forms.

There are four broad categories of fake news:

- **CATEGORY 1**: Fake, false, or regularly misleading websites that are shared on Facebook and social media. Websites may rely on outrage created by distorted headlines and decontextualized or dubious information in order to generate likes, shares, and profits.

- **CATEGORY 2**: Websites that may circulate misleading and/or potentially unreliable information.

- **CATEGORY 3**: Websites which sometimes use clickbait-y headlines and social media descriptions.

- **CATEGORY 4**: Satire/comedy sites, which can offer important critical commentary on politics and society, but have the potential to be shared as actual/literal news.

1. Melissa Zimdars, assistant professor of Communication and Media at Merrimack College.
Fake News

What is it?
• Created using false or misleading information
• Intended to deceive
• Driven by content mills
• Revenue created by clicks/shares/product sales
• Created to inflame emotion
• May advance a political agenda

What is it NOT?
• Shallow or repetitive reporting
• Errors made in reputable publications
• Stories that you do not agree with
Fake News Through History

A few select examples, or we would be here all day.
Older Than America

• 1475: Anti-Semitic “blood libel” fever in Trent, Italy
• 1755: Supernatural forces responsible for the Lisbon earthquake
• 1761: Wrongful torture & execution of Jean Calas, anti-Catholicism in Toulouse, France
• 1782: *Independent Chronicle* article describes atrocities by Indians at behest of King George III
• 1835: Series of articles in *The Sun* spurs Great Moon Hoax
• 1890s: Articles in the *Morning Journal* used to spark the Spanish-American War
Activity 2: Fake News In History
(Politico article)

01
Group 1
• Who tried to stop the spread of fake news?
• Why was this not successful?

02
Group 2
• Who were the targets?
• What happened to them?

03
Group 3
• How could the outcome have been prevented?

04
Group 4
• Can you think of other examples of fake news in history?
Present Day

Pizzagate: 2016

- Russian operatives hack John Podesta’s emails, give them to Wikileaks
- Online message boards try to “decode” emails
- Pizza is “deciphered” as meaning child sex trafficking
- Rumors on 8Chan & Reddit get picked up by a Facebook user from Joplin, Mo whose post goes viral
- Automated accounts spread the story through Twitter, Facebook, message boards
- “Citizen investigators” find out that Democratic operative David Brock had dated the owner of a DC pizza place, Comet Ping Pong
- October 29: Infowars hosted a Pizzagate show
- Comet Ping Pong and owner Jame Alefantis receive threats
- Edgar Welch drives from Salisbury, NC to D.C. to investigate
- Edgar Welch enters Comet Ping Pong, carrying an AR15, searching for evidence, fires weapon
Activity 3: Pizzagate and Real World Consequences

• Watch Video

https://youtu.be/192XFY01wk0

• 3 Minute Reflection

• Why did people believe this false story?
• How did these rumors spread so far and fast?
• Who is responsible?
• What would you have done instead?
Fake News Creators

Yep, people really create this stuff
Who Creates It?

- National Report
- News Punch
- News Examiner
- World News Daily Report
- Huzlers
- ABCNEWS.COM.CO
- The US Patriot
- Empire News
- Infowars

For a more complete list, see www.snopes.com
Who Creates It:  
Example

- Channel One News

[Map of Veles in Macedonia]
Peer-to-Peer Reflection: Would you create fake news?

Why did young people in Macedonia create fake news during the 2016 election?

Would you do it? What if it only affected another country?

Why do you think the USA is so susceptible to the proliferation of fake news?
Be a Savvy Information Consumer

Because knowing is half the battle
Consume Local News

• What’s going on in your neighborhood, school, community center?
  • Read your local newspaper
  • Listen to local radio

• Know your local government:
  • State supreme court, state legislature, city/county officials, school board members

• Read Opposing Views
• Watch PBS NewsHour
• Read / listen to NPR News & local NPR station
• Read editorial pages of newspapers
Check Your Biases

Project Implicit Bias Test
(Harvard University)

The Implicit Association Test
(University of Washington)

Read / Listen to *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*
- Amazon
- Your Library

Fact Check

Use the checklist on the following slide
Self-check the news
Local NPR station
Spot Fake News

• Consider the source
• Check the author
• Check the date
• Check your biases
• Read beyond headline
• Check for supporting sources
• Is it a joke?
• Ask the experts
  • Librarians, Snopes.com, FactCheck.org
Don’t be a Facebook Fool: Think before you share.

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter make sharing very easy (too easy!).

Before you share a story, image, or piece of information, consider:
  • Where did it come from?
  • Is there any proof that it’s true/real?
  • If you Google it, what comes up?

Don’t share something because you want it to be true.

This is one of the best things I have seen in a while. They use the same pink dye that they use on bank notes. This makes the ivory unsellable and it can’t be consumed. (the animals are not harmed and it is saving their lives)

laurennohill:

sonoanthonyl:

Yes my babies save them

Yes yes yes please save my loves. Please please do this to all of them
Activity 4: Group Discussion

READ
• Read the news article assigned to your group

CHECKLIST
• Determine if your news article is fake or real

WRITE
• Record your group decision, Include reasons or argument

REPORT OUT
• Is your article fake or real? Why or why not?
Resources for Students

More tips, tricks, and tools
The End
For 90-minute student workshop
Resources for Educators

Librarians, Instructors, Writing Centers, etc.
Additional Readings


Additional Activities

• Factitious Game by JoLT and AU Game Lab
• Framing Memes Activity from University of Wyoming
• A “Backtrack Journal” Exercise from Medium / Pace University graduate course in Multiplatform Communications
• Based on “An Exercise to Sift for Sources Amid a Blitz of Fake News” from Dot Earth / New York Times
Works Cited


The End
For real.
Questions?

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