Inoculating Students Against Digital Media Manipulation in the Algorithmic Age

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Inoculating Your Students Against Digital Media Manipulation in the Algorithmic Age
Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy

Robert Berkman
Outreach Business Librarian
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY
Quick Poll Everywhere Survey

1. Join Poll by texting: ROBERTBERKMA243 to 37607

2. Take One Question poll at: PollEv.com/robertberkma243
Inoculating Your Students – AND YOUR Institution
AND Community…should we leave behind our LibGuides, Lesson Plans and Library Walls?

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally

Robert Berkman
Outreach Business Librarian
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY
Today’s Workshop

Part 1: Where We’ve Been/Where We Are Now
Part 2: Background, Context & Definitions
Part 3: Today’s Challenge for Librarians
Part 4: Lesson Plans and Beyond
Part 4: Higher Missions, Ethics and Obligations
Part 5: Challenges and Confronting Hurdles
We Call it Fake News: What is that Anyway?
Part 1. How We Got Here
Popular Origins of the Term?

By the Fall of 2016 the Term had Evolved to Mean...
Planted, Paid for False News

Someone needs to put a stop to that murdering witch!!

Another hit job done for Hillary!

FBI Agent Suspected in Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide

An FBI agent believed to be responsible for the latest email leaks was found dead in an apparent murder-suicide early Saturday morning, according to police.

DENVERGUARDIAN.COM
And finally....

Don't let the FAKE NEWS tell you that there is big infighting in the Trump Admin. We are getting along great, and getting major things done!

9:14 AM - 7 Mar 2017

RETWEETS 25,693 LIKES 119,943
Efforts to Pin Down Fake News

THE MULTIPLE SPECTRUMS OF REAL AND FAKE NEWS IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA AND ALGORITHMIC AGE

Investigative
Analytical
Expert
Documentaries
Stories
Features
Breaking

"REAL" NEWS: INTENT IS TO INFORM
Can be done Well or Poorly

Inaccurate
Misinterpreted
Lazy
Incomplete
Unfair
Rushed
Superficial

"FAKE" NEWS: INTENT IS TO DECEIVE

Weaponized
Hoax
Agenda-based
Emotional
Cherry-picked
Tinted
Satire

You CAN Handle the Truth!

Explore, test your knowledge (and biases), and develop new strategies for combating the not-so-new phenomenon of fake news.
Is this Really a New Problem?

Propaganda on Roman Coins

Vance Packards Seminal Work

To a “Post-Truth” Era?
What’s Different Now? A LOT:

• Technological Advances and Changes
  – Algorithms, AI, Machine Learning
  • Google Substituting Machine Learning for Keyword Matching to Rank Results
  – Intentional Design of Addictive Digital Technologies via Psychological Methods
  – What is Next? -- Hard to predict..one example..
What’s Different Now? A LOT:

- Deep Fakes:

And Social/Cultural Phenomena

– Clickbait and Attention Capturing Techniques
– Weaponized Information Used for Political Purposes
  • NEW: Survey and Poll Manipulation; Attacks on Local Newspapers
– Election Tampering
– Reduced confidence in “the expert”
– Teens/Youth skeptical of ALL news and media
– Meme culture
– Rise of the prominence of the image, GIF and videos as purveyor of news and information
– What’s Next? Again…hard to predict…
And What’s Next?....

Russian TV Manipulates Gallup Poll
Results to Show Americans Less Patriotic

The results of a poll conducted by the Gallup Institute showed that in 2018 only 47% of Americans are proud of their country.

The report, headlined "In the last 15 years the number of patriots in the US has fallen, while the majority of Americans do not express any sense of pride, including 25% who say they are "very proud" and 16% who are "moderately proud." That leaves one in 10 who are truly a little (7%) or not at all proud (0%)."

Russia’s information attack against the United States during the 2016 election cycle sought to take advantage of the greater trust that Americans tend to place in local news.

The information operatives who worked out of the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg did not stop at posing as American social media users or spreading false information from purported news sources, according to new details.

They also created a number of Twitter accounts that posed as sources for Americans’ hometown headlines.
"No, the bigger problem is that we're proud of not knowing things. Americans have reached a point where ignorance, especially of anything related to public policy, is an actual virtue. ... It is a new Declaration of Independence: no longer do we hold these truths to be self-evident, we hold all truths to be self-evident, even the ones that aren't true."

Professor Tom Nichols
Most Americans say they have lost trust in the media

THE RESULTS OF A NEW Knight Foundation and Gallup poll released on Tuesday won't come as a huge surprise to most journalists: Trust in the media is down. Again.

A majority of those who were surveyed said they had lost trust in the media in recent years, and more than 30 percent of those who identified themselves as being on the conservative end of the spectrum said they had not only lost faith in the media, but they “expect that change to be permanent.” According to a separate Gallup poll from earlier this year that tracked trust in major institutions, newspapers and television news were among the lowest, exceeded only by Congress.
“If a man is offered a fact which goes against his instincts, he will scrutinize it closely, and unless the evidence is overwhelming, he will refuse to believe it. If, on the other hand, he is offered something which affords a reason for acting in accordance to his instincts, he will accept it even on the slightest evidence.”
Why We Click and Share
A Post Fact Society Means...?

With increase political polarization, amplified by homophily—our preference to connect to people like us—and algorithmic recommender systems, we’re effectively constructing our own realities"—Gilad Lotan, VP Data Science, BuzzFeed
Information Tribalism?

…Each carefully crafted story on either side omitted important detail and context. When this happens constantly, on a daily basis, it systematically and deeply affects people’s perception of what is real…

- "Fake News is not the Only Problem," Gilad Lotan.
Libraries Taking Major Role

REAL NEWS VS. FAKE NEWS

How to tell real news from fake.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “post-truth” as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”

This page is intended to help you to verify and utilize fact-based news resources for research purposes.

Types of Fake News

There are four broad categories of fake news, according to media professor Melissa Zimbars of Merrimack College.

CATEGORY 1: Fake, false, or regularly misleading websites that are shared on Facebook and social media. Some of these websites may rely on “outrage” by using 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.

Fake News Is A Real Problem

Facebook engagement of the top five fake election stories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline Publisher</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President, Replaces Statement Ending the Fed&quot;</td>
<td>960,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;WikiLeaks CONFRMS Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS...Then Drops Another BOMBSHELL Breaking News&quot;</td>
<td>789,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;IT'S OVER: Hillary's ISIS Email Just Leaked &amp; It's Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined Ending the Fed&quot;</td>
<td>754,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Just Read The Law: Hillary is Disqualified From Holding Any Federal Office&quot;</td>
<td>701,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fake news has been around for decades.

So the ability to tell accurate news from fake news is an important skill you'll use for the rest of your life.

**FACT:** 75% of American adults who viewed a fake news headline viewed the story as accurate, and these fake news stories are widely shared on social media.

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**Libraries Taking Major Role**
Hey Kids---It’s Time to Play.....

Find the Fake News!

“Everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts.”—Daniel P. Moynihan
University of Rochester (2)

**Objectives**
- Discern the indicators of a news story likely to be false/misleading
- Debate and discuss reasons for categorizing some news as false
- Learn to modify evaluations based on discussions with classmates

**ANTICIPATORY SET**
Share a few stories, some real and credible, and some hoaxes or highly manipulative and discuss impact

**EXERCISE**
- Each student gets the same news story and uses existing knowledge to evaluate as accurate or false
- Those who believe story is true form a circle in the middle of room
- Those who believe story is false (or are unsure) form a circle around students in inner circle
- Those facing each other pair up and discuss their reasons with other with opposing opinion
- Pair attempts to come to an agreement on whether news item is real or fake

**REVIEW**
- What were some of the strategies used? How was one person able to convince the other?
- What else do you think you need help with when discerning real vs. false news items?
- What is one new strategy you learned today?

(created with www.bubbl.us)
Instruction and Lesson Plans

The CRAAP Test
EVALUATING INFORMATION

1. CURRENCY - the timeliness of the information
2. RELEVANCE - the importance if the information to your topic
3. AUTHORITY - the author's qualifications with regard to the topic
4. ACCURACY - the truthfulness and credibility of the content
5. PURPOSE - the intention or goal of the resource

EVALUATING INFORMATION

Next, we evaluate all information critically. Not all information is created equally, so you need a process of determining what is credible, and what is not. So to evaluate information, we want to see if it passes the CRAAP test. Just remember: CUT THE CRAAP.
Checklists

Guided Research Worksheet

How to Identify Fake News in 10 Steps


Select "Yes" or "No" to the following questions. The more thumbs-down icons you select, the more likely the news article is fake.

1. Do a Visual Assessment
   Assess the overall design. Fake news sites often look amateurish, have lots of annoying ads, and use altered or stolen images.
   Overall, does the news article and website seem high quality?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Identify the News Outlet
   The Wall Street Journal and CNN are examples of news outlets. If you haven't heard of the news outlet, search online for more information.
   Is the news outlet well known, well respected, and trustworthy?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Check the Web Domain
   Many fake news URLs look odd or end with ".com.co" or ".Jo" (e.g., abcnews.com.co) to mimic legitimate news sites.
   Does the URL seem legitimate?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Check the "About Us" Section
   Trustworthy news outlets usually include detailed background information, policy statements, and email contacts in the "About/About Us" section.
   Does the site provide detailed background information and contacts?
   - Yes
   - No
But There’s Lot of LibGuides
In libraries we trust
by Laurie Putnam on MARCH 15, 2018 in BEYOND LIBRARIES, CIVIC SPACES, CONTEXT, LIBRARIANSHIP

In study after study, libraries are ranked among the public’s most trusted sources of information. But how confident can we be in our position as trusted institutions—and how can we sustain that trust? Pew Research’s Lee Rainie helps us put the research into a broader context.

This is part one of a series. Part two is here.
With Creativity and Imagination
You Can Expand Our Reach

• Both Within Your Organization:
  
  • A credit bearing “stealth” information literacy course?
  • Partner with other faculty:
  • Discover info literacy needs among non-academic units
With Creativity and Imagination
You Can Expand Your Reach

Outside Your Organization: Consider perhaps

- Secondary Schools/Activities for Parents (Jenny Dale)
- Local Journalists
- Local Newspapers: letters to the editor; op-eds
- Public Broadcasting Stations
- Chambers of Commerce/Business Associations
- Non Library Professional Associations Regional Groups
- Regional Health Educational Organizations
- Community Workshops (Writers Groups, Continuing Ed., Adult Learning)
- Other???
This school librarian teaches students about (actual) fake news. Here’s how parents can, too.

Recently, congressional committees summoned executives from Facebook, Twitter and Google to Capitol Hill to explain their company’s roles in the national security issue of fake news planted by the Russians to manipulate our last presidential election. Congress wants something done to protect U.S. citizens from fake news, and if the tech companies can’t come up with a technology solution fast enough, then they will step in and impose regulations.

As a school librarian, I disagree with either solution. The only reliable way to protect citizens from fake news, alternate facts, or hate groups is for all of us to learn how to navigate digital information with discernment and skepticism. Teaching that is the job of every librarian, teacher and parent.

[Why I started saying ‘reality-based press’ in 2017 instead of mainstream media]
But It’s Here Where….
Beyond the Single Session

• A more sustainable solution
• Focus on one area perhaps that is “sustainable”?
• Perhaps: scientific consensus for non-scientists: What it is and is not

The collective opinion and judgement of scientists in a particular field of study—general agreement; the theory has become fact; supported by overwhelming evidence, well accepted

It does evolve—around the edges usually.

*When we talk about scientific consensus, we’re talking about an understanding that is thought to be so solid that it will require a whole slew of observations, measurements and experiments to have been grossly misinterpreted for this conclusion to have been reached incorrectly.*” Ethan Siegel (Astrophysicist and Author)

ACTIVITY 1
Are We Up for This Challenge?

Some are not sure…:

“I strongly suspect we are quickly coming to the end of what the library, as library can do to productively engage with students looking for serious, coherent, and sustainable help with these matters…

…These issues are not ‘mere’ ones of handling information. They are cultural (e.g. historical, political, social, religious) issues and unless we are prepared, as a profession, to grapple with such larger matters, we are, in my view, close to a dead end.
And there Are Constraints Beyond Our Control

- Little to no information literacy instruction in most US secondary school curricula
- Your organization’s culture
- Capitalism-hyper capitalism
So... this will take Confidence and some Leadership

- A leader has a vision
- Works with and inspires others
- Thinks long range
- Conveys enthusiasm
- Acts
Some Special Hurdles

- Atypical
- Mindset
- Reluctance/Fear

And finally, librarians must carry all the honorable but weighty baggage of being defined by:
Some Hurdles for Us

ACTIVITY 2
On the Positive Side....

• Librarians becoming more diverse
• Much of what makes for a leader can be learned
Wrapping Up

Final Activity

Optional: Share on this Google Doc:

(will make it available)
Thank You!

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Editor, The Information Advisor’s Guide to Internet Research
Author: Find it Fast: Extracting Expert Information from Social Media, Big Data, Tweets and More (6th ed. 2015, CyberAge)