

Dealing with Fake News

Information Literacy Strategies

By Kim Lewis for LFCC's QEP, ©2017

What is "Fake News"?



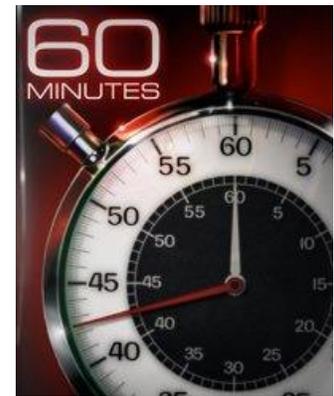
Opper, F. B., *The Fin de Siècle Newspaper Proprietor*



Fake news is **deliberate misinformation** spread by traditional print and broadcast news, or by social media (Leonhardt & Thompson 2017).

Here's another way of saying it:

60 Minutes producer Guy Campanile explained, “What we are talking about are **stories that are fabricated out of thin air**. By most measures, deliberately, and, by any definition, that’s a lie” (Hunt 2016).



60 Minutes Stopwatch.
(1960-1980)

Notes about the “fake news” definition:



- **Fake news is different from satire** because satire’s goal is humor and/or commentary – not misinformation (Hunt 2016). *Saturday Night Live* and *The Onion* both use satire.
- Some researchers, however, think satire might be considered fake news since it has the **potential to fool** the audience (Wardle 2017).
- President Trump uses the term “fake news” to describe mainstream media. In response, in 2017 Facebook stopped using the term “fake news” and started using the term **“false news”** to describe deliberate misinformation (Oremus 2017).



Fake news is created and disseminated to . . .

- Harm an agency, entity or person. (For example, fake news can drive a company out of business.)
- Gain financially (Clicks on a story can make the fake news creator money.)
- Gain politically (Fake news can influence voters.)(Hunt 2016).

Americans have a long history of creating and consuming fake news.

- In 1730, Virginia's governor **William Gooch** falsely reported a slave rebellion had occurred and was effectively put down. His report justified a violent slave repression movement (Theobald 2005).
- **Benjamin Franklin** wrote a fake newspaper story that King George III was working with "scalping" Indians to suppress colonists. Franklin's goal was to move public opinion toward revolution (The long and brutal 2017).



Chevillet, J., *Benjamin Franklin*

Today, the scope of the problem is massive.

- **62% of Americans use social media**, which is often a conduit for fake news, to receive their news (Gottfried & Shearer 2016).
- A study by *The New York Times* showed how a tweet by a person with no more than 40 followers went viral and was shared **16,000 times on Twitter** (Maheshwari 2017).
- Moreover, people have **difficulty distinguishing** between fake news and real news (Leonhardt & Thompson 2017).
- Some media analysts see fake news as **a threat to democracies** around the world (Merkel warns 2016).

The Response



- Fact-checking websites like **Snopes.com**, **PolitiFact.com** and **FactCheck.org** have posted guides to help readers avoid fake news websites (Robertson & Kiely 2016).
- **Facebook** and **Google** are taking measures to prevent the spread of fake news. Critics, however, believe more action is needed (Wingfield, Isaac & Benner 2016).
- **Barack Obama**, **Angela Merkel** and a host of other leaders – including **Pope Francis** – have spoken out strongly against fake news (Zauzmer 2016).

What can you do?

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) published these guidelines:

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND
Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR
Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?
Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE
Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



IS IT A JOKE?
If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS
Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

IFLA
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

1. Be smart about your source choices.
2. Cite those sources correctly so that your reader knows you are trustworthy, the original writer gets credit, and your writing has credibility.
3. Don't be part of the fake news problem.

Thank you



Opper, F. B., *The Fin de Siècle Newspaper Proprietor*

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Images

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