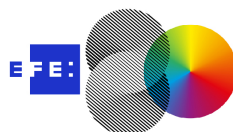


Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age

ASEF MEDIA HANDBOOK

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



WITH THE SUPPORT OF



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



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Foreword

The notion of misinformation is not new. It reared its malevolent head at the dawn of time, in Eden, when the serpent persuaded Eve to partake of the apple with the promise that it would make her as gods, by opening her eyes to good and evil. Since then, it has become part of the corridors of history, influencing lives and events, great and small. With the pervasive presence of social media, it is with us even more so today.

I should emphasize that the media should not be perceived as bad, even though its traditional aim of providing news in a fair, accurate and objective manner has been compromised. We, at the Asia-Europe Foundation*, consider the media as playing an essential and positive role in society. Which is why we continue to actively engage media industry stakeholders in annual events enabling a diverse exchange of perspectives.

At the 9th ASEF Editors' Roundtable (ASEFERT9) in Brussels in 2018, we discussed the Fight Against Misinformation with news editors and senior journalists from various media organisations based in Asia and Europe. We continued the conversation with young

journalists at the 12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar (ASEFJS12), at the side-lines of the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Madrid last December.

Under the topic "Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age", ASEFJS12 was exceptional, due to the rich diversity of perspectives. Over a vibrant and informative programme, participants, trainers and experts shared their candid observations on how journalistic practices and innovative tools could serve as a credible way for media to be considered trustworthy. Several participants also took the opportunity to present projects or initiatives they had been involved in previously.

To capture the flavour and content of the discussions, we have put together this Handbook on the ASEFJS12. It includes articles that we believe will facilitate a better understanding about what trust in the media and information sharing looks like from both Asian and European perspectives. In the process, it will enable all of us to appreciate the challenges that journalists and those involved in media communications face today.



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is an intergovernmental, not-for-profit organisation which aims to bring together people from Asia and Europe to address common challenges. It is the only permanent institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. Established in 1997, ASEF is based in Singapore, but organises many projects, seminars and get-togethers in both continents.

Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age

TRUST IN AN AGE OF CHANGE

PERSPECTIVE FROM ASIA BY YUSOF ABDUL-RAHMAN

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) last year, Asia's GDP was set to overtake the GDP of the rest of the world combined in 2020. Even as the world is coming to terms with the economic impact of Covid-19, Asian countries would still make up the lion's share of the global list of fast growing economies. The race to improve digital infrastructure has brought about significant shifts in the way media is consumed with trends pointing toward a rapid uptake in news consumption online over traditional media formats like television, newspapers and radio. This uptake has been brought into sharp focus as populations are forced into lockdowns and movement control orders. Businesses have had to dramatically shift toward remote working protocols. Mass gathering events are replaced with online webinars and regular meetings are conducted from home via popular video web conferencing tools such as Zoom and Skype. Newsrooms have been significantly impacted by social distancing measures. So-called distributed newsrooms have had to embrace more digital solutions to newsgathering, strengthen their social monitoring practices and find a way to continue the regular editorial discussions online that were previously more naturally occurring when journalists are face-to-face.

But what of the audience? Even before Covid-19, the advent of a digital age has meant that the way people learn of political happenings and notable events have become increasingly complex. Traditional forms of media gave way to a proliferation of new sources of information. Rapid and perpetual change in media consumption behaviour is today a perennial challenge for an industry seeking to remain

relevant and sustainable.

It has led to persistent concern that trust in media has declined, brought on in part by the rise of online mis- and disinformation. Legacy news businesses have pivoted toward increasingly social focused and platform dependent media strategies and who along with digital born organisations are vulnerable to "platform capture". This is where people's experience of media forms can be significantly affected by hyper-partisan content, bad actors, government regulation and sudden platform algorithm change.

A comparative study between different countries on levels of trust in media sources revealed different results from different countries. According to the Ipsos Global Advisory survey from 2019, more than half (52%) believe that so-called fake-news is prevalent in all the different sources of information but 62% overall were particularly sceptical of online news websites and platforms. Yet the survey, which looked at people from across 27 countries, found that trust in different news sources remain high in countries such as Malaysia and India. The findings even show that Malaysians trust the media more than five years previously particularly in newspapers, television and radio. For example, only 17% of Serbians trust TV and radio compared to 68% in Malaysia and 71% in India. This points to a significant trust gap between traditional media and online news sources. Opinions are split over whether public broadcasters can be trusted more than private ones but a plurality (46%) of the global population believe that public broadcasters provide a necessary service.



...people across the world are most trusting of news and information they receive from persons they know”.

The survey found that people across the world are most trusting of news and information they receive from persons they know. This is one of the key problems faced by journalism today. Studies done by the Media Insight Project in collaboration with the Associated Press showed how “people who see an article from a trusted sharer but written by an unknown media source have much more trust in the information than people who see the same article from a reputable media source shared by a non-trusted person”. It suggests that the credibility of a brand or individual story is affected by what kinds of people are sharing it on social media. “The sharers’s own credibility can influence the reader’s opinions about the reporting source”.

As access to the internet becomes easier and more affordable, a large number of people will have the opportunity to consume large amounts of information but lack the education to assess that information critically. Combined with the relative ease with which each individual can share that information through social media or messaging apps, these individuals can become unofficial ambassadors of the content and therefore also the brand being shared. In response to this, there

have been efforts by organisations to promote responsible sharing by improving media and information literacy (MIL). This can appear in the shape of government-backed initiatives such as those seen in Singapore and the Philippines in promoting MIL among the youth in schools.

A functioning democracy relies on Informed citizens. Access to relevant, clear, reliable and fact-based information is an essential function of the news media. Trust in public institutions are closely tied to trust in the journalism that observes the political process. The threat to one, often impacts on the other.

INFORMATION DISORDER

Perspective from Europe by Eoghan SWEENEY

Disinformation, fake news, information disorder — call it what you will, the explosion in unreliable information, much of it malicious in nature, is something that has become part of all our lives, whether we like it or not.

The digital revolution has, like any major technological advance, brought both benefits and challenges. Possibly the most serious of these challenges is the way in which ever larger amounts of information are in the hands of ever greater numbers of people - and at a speed that means that, even if the will were there, vetting is simply not possible.

Efforts to manipulate populations through skilful use of propaganda and other disinformation campaigns are nothing new, but the rapid flows of information to populations not necessarily equipped to deal with it are a boon to bad actors. This has the potential to be particularly pronounced in the case of developing societies. There is a danger that the rapid spread of personal communications devices and internet access may not be accompanied by a comparable increase in access to education. Not having had the benefit of an adequate education does not bar one from having access to social media or private messaging systems, where the latest videos, photographs and memes circulate unabated.

The opportunities for, and dangers of, destabilising disinformation campaigns should be clear.

Calls for technological or regulatory solutions are understandable. Asking the major communication platforms to choke off disinformation closer to its source, or creating harsh sanctions on those found to be guilty of spreading it, are natural reactions. But they will be of limited effectiveness as long as there are actors with the intelligence, creativity and determination to frustrate them.

As well as looking at such “supply side” measures, it is crucial to create a healthier environment on the receiving end. Increased awareness and critical evaluation empower the public and create less fertile ground on which bad actors can cast their seeds.

It is, of course, a task that will take time, and will never truly be finished. The role of the media, as a gatekeeper and interpreter of large amounts of information for the public it serves, may never have been more important. It is therefore crucial that media regain the trust we are repeatedly told has been ebbing away. Dealing with disinformation in a way that is decisive, clear and transparent will be a major step toward this goal.

Modules & Topics ►

Modules

The modules follow a structure that first establishes a common understanding of the nature and magnitude of threats to modern journalism.

MODULE 1

Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age

This module deals primarily with the challenge of tackling online information disorder (misinformation, disinformation and mal-information).

MODULE 2

Sources & Fact-Checking

This module dives into the tools & methods used in factchecking, data accuracy, and source verification.

MODULE 3

Social Media & Digital Content

Module 3 addresses social media, particularly user-generated content, modified photo & video content, and AI in a digital context.



12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar



Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age



FACTS AND FAKERY, NAVIGATING THE OVER INFORMATION AGE

by Yusof ABDUL-RAHMAN

Nearly all legacy media institutions that started prior to what we call the information age, were created on the basic premise that there was a scarcity of information available for public consumption. This is particularly true of the news media. From the earliest newspapers to the earliest wire agency (The Associated Press) and public service institutions like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), readers, listeners and early television audiences could expect the news to come into their daily lives in a timely fashion. They could expect to consume information that was verifiable, fact-based, relevant and professionally produced. Their experience of news consumption was entirely passive and trust was implicit.

The quality and breadth of stories provided by the publisher determined its brand identity. Discovery of other stories by the audience were mainly determined by editors in the form of a bundled experience provided by the publication (whatever was included in the paper) or the broadcaster (whatever was included in the program schedule). In other words, agency over the content produced remained with and was wholly determined by the producer of said content, and in certain cases, also by those with significant influence over the company. Since the start of the third millennia, advances in information technology have meant that this was no longer the case, turning much of what traditional or legacy media had understood, on its head.

The information age was in part enabled by the digital age. Moore's law on computing technology — that it gets smaller, faster and holds more data every year — along with the

creation of a World Wide Web have caused seismic shifts in the way mass media is consumed. On the one hand, the ability to have mobile internet enabled devices mean that information is at your fingertips, never far from you in either public or private space and is eminently customisable. On the other hand, the technology has enabled you create your own content and reach unprecedented viewership without much cost.

News is increasingly being consumed on the same devices used for communication. With social media, the news is consumed on a platform that is fueled by the act of sharing. We no longer merely ingest information but almost instantaneously want to discuss it and publicly. We play a part in the dissemination of a story and how it is perceived. In other words, agency over what content is available and how it is “discovered” now involves the very consumers who once solely relied on institutions and companies to provide them. News in the digital age has become unbundled with the ability to choose what, when and where you consume affecting your discovery of “other news” which you might otherwise not know about. This is not to say that discoverability now lies with the consumer. The digital age is driven by data.

The rise and dominance of platform giants such as Facebook and Google have shown the importance data plays in platform success but an overreliance on such platforms bring with them their own unique challenges. Media use is not only on-demand but also algorithmically curated or personalised. Today, data researchers play as much of a role into creating content that closer

matches our preferences. Data is constantly being collected allowing analysts to gaze into our lives figuring out our daily habits, interests, purchases and travel. Our awareness of this process affects our trust in the experience. How reliable is this data and what are the limitations of an algorithm that is always vulnerable to bias?

Where once information was scarce and difficult to come by, the digital era have brought on an overabundance of information. Barriers of entry to creating media for mass consumption have fallen dramatically and the rise of citizen journalism, the exponential growth of user generated content and more recently influencer-driven information have altered the way in which information is discovered, perceived and consumed online. Developing analytical tools and adopting metrics as part of media strategy to develop story ideas, format and product design have now become part of the news industry essentials kit.

The perpetually changing landscape of the digital age has affected media trust in two significant ways. Firstly, a significant shift from legacy brands as sole purveyors of the news to platform based online media which include news aggregators, social platforms and the rise of influencer journalism. Focus on attention economy and media information literacy have created new challenges for established media to pursue engagement strategies and have a deep connection with their audience. News as professionally produced content shares the same space as information created by non-

professionals in the battle for likes and driving conversation in social media. For legacy media, brand trust is still important but the ability to create content in a timely fashion for heavy social media users in a push for relevance is just as essential. The digital age has given publishers the potential of a larger audience than ever before but they are also more complex.

A study by Antonis KALOGEROPOULOS contained within the Reuters Institute Digital Report 2019 spoke of “news moments”. Qualitative research in news consumption by the young concluded that audience needs change depending on different moments of consumption. It broke this into four key moments: Dedicated (finding time for news, usually evenings and weekends), Updated (Brief news updates, usually mornings as you prepare for the day), Time-Filler (Not news per se, something to be distracted by, usually on a commute or a break) and Intercepted (A notification, anytime). If, as the seminal New York Times Innovation Report 2014 suggests, that the mission is to get more people to read good journalism, to have stories that are authoritative, clarifying and so vital that people are willing to pay for it, then it is essential to adopt the right strategy that reaches and engages with present and future audiences. Understanding the different needs and news moments of a generation who have no memory of a pre-internet age as well as those who remember a world without Facebook and YouTube are key to establishing brand relevance and brand trust, whether that brand is represented by a company, an institution or a journalist.

“

The digital age has given way to the social age and a platform-dominated media environment can be gamed to apply significant pressure against news organisations, individual journalists and the public”

The other and by no means less significant way the digital age has affected media trust lie in the prominence of online disinformation and misinformation. In a 2018 study by the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) into social organised media manipulation, the researchers noted that “the absence of human editors in our news feeds also makes it easy for political actors to manipulate social networks”. The study noted that social media are among the most used applications on the internet. “Social media have gone from being the natural infrastructure for sharing collective grievances and coordinating civic engagement, to being a computational tool for social control, manipulated by canny political consultants, and available to politicians in democracies and dictatorships alike”.

The OII’s 2019 report on global disinformation claimed to have found evidence of “organised social media manipulation campaigns 70 countries, up from 48 countries in 2018 and 28 countries in 2017”. As if to illustrate the point, the recent British general election at the end of 2019 was mired in controversy over political

advertising. One campaign group, the Coalition for Reform and Political Advertising, dubbed it a “fake news and disinformation election” and called for fact-checking of political advertising to be a legal requirement.

The term “fake news” is problematic and discussion surrounding the subject gained prominence after the 2016 US presidential election showing no sign of abating. In itself an oxymoron, that is something is either fake or news if news is taken to be fact-based and verified, usage of the term “fake news” highlight two areas of concern. First, that the term has been weaponised by critics of the news media and secondly, as a study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) found in 2017, that people see the difference between what is fake and what is real in news as a matter of degree. The failure to have a clear distinction mean that hyper partisan content from propaganda or sponsored content from advertising can be grouped under the same broad category and considered news.





...fake news is the best thing that has happened for decades. It gives mainstream quality journalism the opportunity to show that it has value based on expertise, ethics, engagement and experience. It is a wake-up call to be more transparent, relevant, and to add value to people's lives. It can develop a new business model of fact-checking, myth-busting and generally getting its act together as a better alternative to fakery”

–Professor Charlie Beckett, London School of Economics, Blogpost 2017

Efforts to tackle disinformation, misinformation and malinformation have seen a proliferation of fact-checking initiatives. It has identified a need for tools that journalists and news consumers alike can use to address trust issues during the digital age. Debate over the need for companies to better moderate their content and for governments to introduce more regulation in digital space continues with concern on the way such measures might impact on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Technological advances in Artificial Intelligence, Virtual and Augmented Reality and the internet of things will further impact society and politics. So will it impact the information environment. The digital age has given way to the social age and a platform-dominated media environment can be gamed to apply significant pressure against news organisations, individual journalists and the public. The big tech companies themselves are vulnerable to “platform capture” which can be defined by a combination of various influences such as bad actors, the threat of government regulation, controversial if not

libertarian conceptions of privacy, speech and profit as well as frequently shifting priorities in distribution and engagement through sudden algorithm changes.

Access to reliable high-quality information and a safe space for citizens to discuss, debate and make decisions is central to keeping a strong functioning democracy. For some like Professor Charlie Beckett of the London School of Economics believe that the threat to media trust was a necessary call-to-action.

“...fake news is the best thing that has happened for decades. It gives mainstream quality journalism the opportunity to show that it has value based on expertise, ethics, engagement and experience. It is a wake-up call to be more transparent, relevant, and to add value to people's lives. It can develop a new business model of fact-checking, myth-busting and generally getting its act together as a better alternative to fakery”. - Professor Charlie Beckett, London School of Economics, Blogpost 2017

INITIATIVES IN ASIA

Asia has seen rapid change in media consumption behaviour. According to the 2018 GlobalWebIndex survey, television still showed a strong influence over daily activity but the amount of screen time per day was mostly devoted to Social Media. Second-screening habits saw a rise in mobile phone use. The survey also found that in most fast-growth markets, which is almost all of Asia except for Japan, mobiles account for more than 50% of online time – meaning they have passed the Mobile Tipping Point – the point when internet users spend longer online on their mobiles than all other devices combined.

Notable efforts in Asia that address the issue of trust in newsmedia are challenged by rapid developments in digital, mobile and platform-dominated media.

► Rappler News

Rappler is an online news platform in the Philippines. Digital-born and focused on social media, Rappler quickly became the country's fourth largest news website. In 2016, it experienced an intense period of online harassment and came under significant political pressure for their reporting over the controversial government War on Drugs campaign that summer. Suspecting that the attacks they experienced were coordinated, Rappler gathered data over three months and took their results to Facebook in what was to become one of the earliest examples that illustrated the weaponisation of social media and online communities by bad actors. Due to Rappler's over reliance on social platform for distribution and audience engagement, they were especially vulnerable to platform capture. A 2019 study by the RISJ found that Rappler's experience forced them to redefine audience engagement and move on from trying to reach the community openly "at scale" toward a strategy that encourages "stronger relationships with audiences, emphasising physical encounters, investment in niche audiences over empty reach, and moving communities to action (online and offline)".

► The Quint

The Quint in India is also a news website that had first launched on Facebook. It is vulnerable to the same risks of various forms of platform capture. The Quint's mobile-first and platform-dominated strategy is aimed at 18-35 year olds and India has the world's largest youth population. Citizen journalism play a key role in their engagement strategy creating a portal called MyReport where the audience can submit their own stories. The platform is designed inhouse to be optimised for mobile. Training is offered as is payment for regular submissions. A year since launch, the Quint has around 700 citizen journalists in its MyReport network. They also have a Fact-checking initiative called WebQoof which engages audiences as misinformation informants and combatants. For Facebook messenger, it uses a chatbot to talk to readers about issues they are interested in. They first used WhatsApp as the main tool for collaborating with audiences but WhatsApp changed its terms and conditions on automated or bulk messaging so Quint was forced to transition its entire audience in disinformation-busting and other citizen reporting projects to another app, Telegram. While this enabled WebQoof to continue, what then becomes of the mis-/disinformation that is primarily shared on the WhatsApp platform?



► India Elections 2019

India's election in 2019 provided the backdrop for an urgent call to address misinformation within closed messaging groups. India had over 200 million WhatsApp users and in the lead up to elections, deadly mob attacks fuelled by rumours on massive chat groups on the platform demonstrated how mis-/disinformation was an online problem that had very real and at times deadly offline consequences. The change in WhatsApp's user conditions was an effort to tackle this head on. It remains a very potent area for news sharing because peer-to-peer messaging apps inevitably involve people you know and studies have shown a greater tendency to trust information shared by people you know. Since WhatsApp released their Business API, which allowed for messages to be received at scale and enabled business users to create very specific personalised information be sent back to users, some news media like the Telegraph and Washington Post have started to look into

ways of delivering news there. While the Quint found the limitations to bulk messaging on WhatsApp meant they could no longer use the platform to enable their members to push back against misinformation, the app could still be used as a tipline for fact-checking. In the lead up to the Indian elections, a collaboration between WhatsApp, Pop-Up Newsroom (an initiative co-founded by Meedan and Dig Deeper) and Proto (an Indian start-up) set up a research project to look into misinformation in private messaging channels. Using a tipline model, the project was able to look closer at how news was shared on a very local level, or what was called then called, "communal rumours". Fact-checking initiatives often tackle rumours and misinformation once it has become more widespread, in other words, once it has become a "national viral rumour". By looking into identifying very local communal rumours, the project could look into ways of seeing if the misinformation can be "nipped in the bud".

MODULE 1: MEDIA TRUST & INFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

ONLINE INFORMATION – PERILS AND PITFALLS

by Eoghan SWEENEY

In recent years, the practice of checking the veracity or authenticity of online information and content has become an increasingly recognised part of the journalist's arsenal. Referred to under a variety of terms — digital verification, open-source intelligence — expertise in the field has proven to be a powerful tool for media, NGOs, activists and many others.

The increasing adoption of such practices and techniques comes at a time when pressures of time and competition for audiences are as never before. The near ubiquity of internet connections and mobile devices means hard deadlines are a thing of the past, as news is available at any time, anywhere.

Without a doubt, the increased access to information, and free and cheap tools that allow it to be used in new and creative ways, are a boon to the journalist. However, with new opportunities come new dangers. Misuse can often lead to unforeseen consequences, and reputational and/or financial damage.

Numerous factors accentuate those dangers:

The Need for Speed

With constant rolling deadlines, the pressure to be first is ever-present. Few journalists would argue with the statement that “Accuracy is more important than speed”; but with a story of major importance breaking, no one wants to be left behind. Building a cohesive story, with carefully checked facts and figures, runs the risk of being drowned out as countless competitors rush to publish first.

Many news outlets have tried to address this by quickly reporting “what is known”, and adding iterations through social media feeds or a “running report”. With so many of these appearing, however, the temptation to publish the dramatic or salacious development — even with the caveat that “We cannot verify this information at this time” — is great.



Few journalists would argue with the statement that ‘Accuracy is more important than speed’; but with a story of major importance breaking, no one wants to be left behind.

FOMO

Closely related to this is the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO): News outlets are increasingly conscious of metrics of engagement. If one outlet publishes a detail that quickly becomes the focus of attention, others will jump on the bandwagon, sometimes — but not always — referring to where it was first published. In the case of dramatic developments being reported, there is little to no guarantee that, if they turn out to be inaccurate, the corrections or rebuttals will have nearly as much exposure or impact.

Tools — Handle With Care

While journalistic fundamentals remain as important as ever, online verification requires a new or expanded skillset. Fortunately, in order to approach this field, we do not necessarily need to become computer programmers. There is a plethora of free tools available to the journalist; these tools can increase speed and efficiency, and obviate the need for advanced technical or coding skills. They must, however, be approached with caution.

In the case of any tool, it is crucial to know:

- » What it can do for you
- » What it can't do
- » How it works

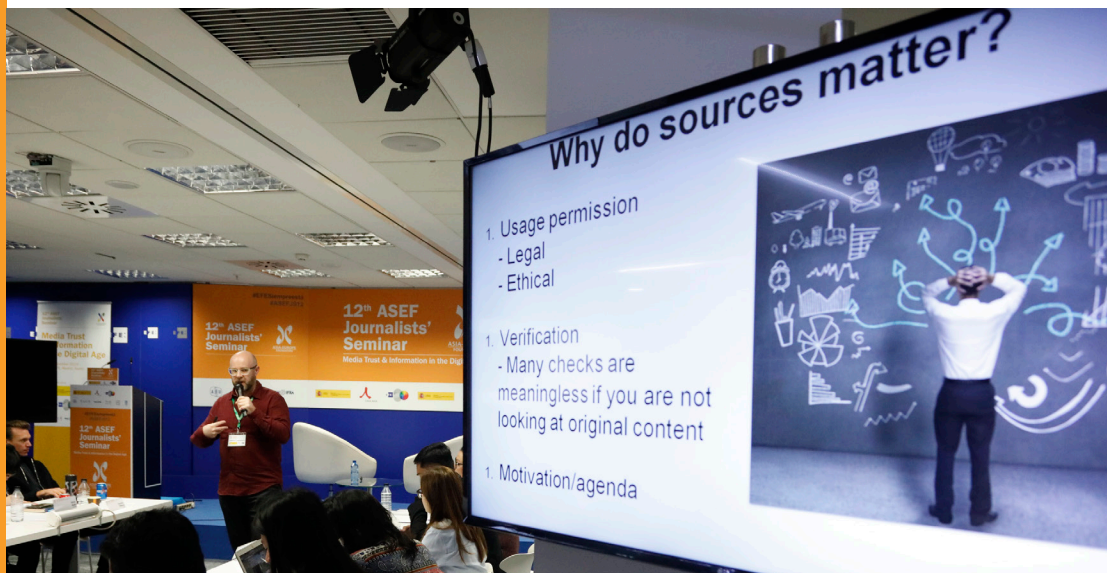
Misunderstanding Results

One such tool that has gained in popularity is the image analyser. These allow the user to submit images that are then analysed for evidence of manipulation — often displayed as contrasting pixels.

Careless use of such tools can very easily lead to false positives — the user believing there is evidence of malicious fakery when no such thing has taken place. Effective use of the tools requires careful study and practice and, even then, incomplete conclusions are possible. In the tutorials section of the website for the popular FotoForensics tool, Dr Neal KRAWETZ cautions:

“Keep in mind: analysing pictures is a complex task. There is no one-button solution that will tell you if a picture is real or digitally altered”

Jonas WAGNER, the creator of the similar service Forensically, points out that people have thanked him for developing the tool, confidently declaring that it has helped them to “prove” that the 1969 moon landings were faked.



What's Your Source's Source?

It is equally essential, if you are using a tool as a source of information, to know how the tool itself is obtaining that information.

Weather provides one such example: comparing the conditions visible in a video or photograph with reports for the area at the date/time in question is a relatively common practice among digital verification practitioners. However, websites and apps providing this information usually report what they can access from the nearest available weather station to the relevant location; in some cases this can be at a location and elevation different enough to make the information unreliable.

In early 2019, social media analyst Luca HAMMER (Twitter: @luca) published a series of tweets about a document, sent to members of the European Parliament, claiming to show “clear evidence of US meddling in this EU law making process”.

Hammer found that the conclusions were based on the presumed location of the holders of Twitter accounts posting tweets attempting to influence voters. Investigating further, he showed that this location information resulted from faulty criteria.

- » If an account filled out the location field, they try to match it to a region.
- » If the field is empty or can't be matched, they use the language of the Tweet.
- » If English it's Washington DC, if German, Berlin.

The company providing this information confirmed to Hammer that when the location setting on a Twitter account was not enabled (Twitter has since entirely disabled this feature), “our tool falls back on the language in a Tweet. Since the vast majority is in English, they will by default be placed in the US, the country with the most English speakers”.

The pitfalls of such a simplistic approach to analysis surely need not be emphasised.

Takeaway

To sum up, when deciding to use an online tool or service, there are several important practices you should follow:

- » Search online for mentions of it. Has it been used by reputable practitioners? Has anyone reported faulty results?
- » Learn how to use the tool. Test it out under controlled conditions i.e. to investigate information you already know the status of. Know how, if used incorrectly, it can lead you astray.
- » Check how and from where the tool or service is getting its information. Are there cases in which this can cause it to provide faulty or questionable results?



It is equally essential, if you are using a tool as a source of information, to know how the tool itself is obtaining that information.

EUROPEAN FACT-CHECKING INITIATIVES

Fact-checking initiatives across Europe in 2019 addressed a number of dimensions, encompassing traditional journalism, the role of social media platforms, and training and education for the fact-checkers of the future. Unsurprisingly, the elections for the European Parliament, and Brexit, dominated the information landscape. The former led to a major collaboration that leveraged the expertise and resources of journalists from multiple countries and organisations.

► FactCheckEU

Perhaps the most ambitious fact-checking initiative undertaken in Europe in 2019 was FactCheckEU. The project was created by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) at the Poynter Institute. It brought together 19 news organisations and dedicated fact-checkers from 13 European countries, ranging from the likes of global news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP) to small independent operators like the German CORREKTIV Faktencheck.

The aim of FactCheckEU was to safeguard the elections for the European Parliament by detecting and evaluating information across the continent as it emerged.

Funded by the IFCN, Google, and the Open Society Initiative for Europe, FactCheckEU

ran for just over two months. The partners, all signatories to the IFCN's code of principles, sought out disinformation and inaccurate reporting, and also accepted questions from the public across a range of topics via a section available on the project's homepage.

By the time voting took place, the group had published 90 fact-checks, with translations in 13 languages. Differing levels of resources were dealt with by keeping the logistics as simple as possible; most of the time, collaboration was carried out through use of a spreadsheet and Google Docs.

One measure of the project's success was that at its end, most of the partners expressed a willingness to continue to cooperate.



► Full Fact

In the United Kingdom, matters of information were understandably dominated by the various issues surrounding Brexit. The UK's leading independent fact-checker, Full Fact, did, however, find the time to produce a comprehensive report on its early experiences as a member of the Facebook Third Party Fact Checking programme.

The July report outlined the work Full Fact had already done as part of the programme - which operates worldwide — and used its experiences to make a series of recommendations.

Full Fact's key judgment on the programme was that it was worthwhile, and that it included “work of clear social value”. The UK organisation wrote approvingly of the “transparency” and “impartiality” involved, stressing that Facebook exercised no editorial control over what was fact-checked and whether or how the conclusions were published.

The key recommendations on proceeding with the programme did, however, include concerns over Facebook's lack of transparency on data, calling for metrics on the reach of fact-checks to be shared with the fact-checkers. Full Fact also called for Facebook to continue to work on developing automated solutions, given the volume of content posted on the platform, and recommended that the programme be expanded to also cover the Facebook-owned Instagram.

For its work on the Facebook programme, Full Fact largely steered clear of politics, prioritising “content with the most potential for specific harm, such as potential risks to life, or to people's health and wellbeing”.

► EUfactcheck

The IFCN's code of principles also provided the methodological underpinning for an educational project by the European Journalism Training Association (EJTA).

Based on a network of journalism schools across Europe, EUfactcheck stated its aim as “to motivate fact-based debate in the EU and to stimulate media and information literacy”.

Rather than competing with existing initiatives in Europe, the project was aimed squarely at the next generation of fact-checkers, organising training “bootcamps” in Ljubljana and Utrecht and producing a series of resources outlining fact-checking methodology for journalism students and educators.

The training bootcamps enabled EUfactcheck to grow its network to more than 30 schools, extending the reach of the project across central and eastern Europe.

COMBATTING DIS- AND MISINFORMATION THROUGH MEDIA LITERACY

by *Yusof ABDUL-RAHMAN*

The basic premise of using media literacy to tackle dis- and misinformation is that the more informed and critically trained a person is, the less susceptible they are to false or misleading information. Media literacy traditionally focused on the analysis and delivery of information through various forms of media including but not limited to the news media. Prominent discussions surrounding “fake news” have reignited interest in news literacy especially by those aiming to provide people with better tools to navigate partisan media content, separating fact from false information and potentially limit the spread of misinformation.

In the digital age, people no longer merely consume media but are themselves creators of content and agents of distribution. Digital first and social platform focused media are susceptible to bad actors weaponising misinformation. Efforts in tackling so-called, “fake news” stop being about disproving the lie but becomes about stopping people from using the lie.

So how does media literacy help the combat against mis- and disinformation? By the late 1980s and therefore prior to the digital and social age, media advocates government agencies and educators determined that media literacy should carry five core concepts:

» All media messages are constructed. Which is to say that they do not reflect reality but are a deliberate interpretation and construction that involved many decisions and other contributing factors. Having the tools to take these constructs apart is a crucial step toward critically assessing information.

- » Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules. Beyond grammar, syntax and metaphor, “language” here also include multimedia applications in trying to convey a pre-constructed reality. Visual media conveying intimacy through close ups, sound conveying urgency through sirens etc.
- » Different people experience the same media message differently. Differences in culture, gender, education and age allow for different interpretations. How aware is the content creator of the diversity of the audience and the potential of reaching unintended audiences? Something that is funny for some could be inflammatory for others.
- » Media have embedded values and points of view. The messages carry a subtext of what is important by those creating the content therefore it is important to be aware of the unstated messages that are not carried.
- » Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or influence. Raising awareness in the way the media are influenced by commercial considerations allows the audience to consider questions of ownership and evaluate the intention behind those messages. This also applies to social networks and the Big Techs who own the platforms.

These key concepts are still relevant because the basic principles for evaluating content has not altered despite the dramatic changes the media landscape has gone through until today. Promoting “purposeful reflective judgement” and critical thinking skills can help encourage people to share responsibly in the social age. The freedom to like, comment and share comes with risk and responsibility. There needs to be



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an awareness on safety issues that exist both online and offline stemming from hate speech, incitement to violence and online bullying. Media can affect culture in the way that content can influence the consciousness of the audience.

The complexity of today's digital information landscape has called for a more combined approach. Audiences no longer question the provenance of say, an article and question its intentions but want to understand more widely the functions of media and other information providers so as to make informed decisions as users, producers and distributors of content.

Media and Information Literacy, or MIL, expands on media literacy concepts to include an understanding of how an increasingly diverse media landscape intersects with the needs of content creators in their effort to reach their audience. It requires an assessment on whether this is done in both legal and ethical ways with respect to human rights. For UNESCO, MIL lies at the core of freedom of expression in a digital society. While all this can help in empowering the public with skills to better manage information, it is not enough to build a full resilience against mis- or disinformation in the digital age.

Speaking at Google's Global Media Literacy Summit in London last year, Sam Wineburg from Stanford University suggested that a high degree of critical thinking was not a guarantee in spotting false information. In fact, he went so far as to

say that smart people, who tend to trust their intelligence and therefore their ability to critically assess information themselves, are more likely to ignore the very benefits that the digital age affords us; an abundance of information.

Wineburg, and his colleague Joel BREAKSTONE, both of the Stanford History Education Group, focused their media literacy presentation on methodology. They put forward the notion that the problem in tackling misinformation with media literacy came down to determining the right kind of media literacy skills to apply. To demonstrate their point, they compared the source evaluation methodology used by "smart" students at Stanford University with that of professional fact-checkers. According to Wineburg, the dominant paradigm in Media Literacy for the internet is a checklist approach and the students approached their task according to the way they were taught. This meant focusing on the website they were given to evaluate to see if the information was current, relevant, contained visible signs of credibility which they could score and so on. Wineburg called this, "vertical reading" as the students spent time examining the site in detail and in isolation.

By contrast, the fact-checkers' first action, almost instantaneously was to leave the site and proceeded to search the web to assess what was being said about it by other sources. In other words, they engaged in "lateral reading" using the web to find out who was behind the information and what other sources say.

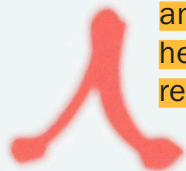
Unlike the fact-checkers, the students methodology had failed to identify the site they were given to evaluate as false. The exercise demonstrated the limitations of a checklist approach which had become popular when information and resources were difficult to find. In today's digital age, there is an overabundance of information available suggesting that checklists were an analogue approach to digital information. Wineburg believes that many media literacy classes are at risk of teaching students to use a 20th Century solution to a 21st Century problem. It's time to start thinking about the web, like a web. Multiple sources of information are now instantly available almost anywhere.

Wineburg urged for a shift from relying on critical thinking and one's own smarts to using the tools of the web. "Hubris," he said, "is the enemy of fact-checking".

This is not to say that MIL is diminished in its role. The Stanford researchers also made another salient point by dispelling the myth surrounding the generation of people who have never known a world without the internet and social media. So called digital natives, netizens or the app generation have grown up with a high fluency and fluidity in the use of devices but it doesn't guarantee that they possess the sophistication in thinking critically to evaluate information.

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...key [Media Literacy] concepts are still relevant because the basic principles for evaluating content has not altered despite the dramatic changes the media landscape has gone through until today. Promoting “purposeful reflective judgement” and critical thinking skills can help encourage people to share responsibly in the social age”



CASA ASIA



Asia perspective: EDUCATING THE CROWD

Last year, Google announced a partnership with the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) in the Philippines. Google's funding support will enable the AIJC to hold "school summits" across the country where they expect to train 300 high school teachers to teach media literacy to around 9,000 students each year. They hope the initiative will help more Filipinos tell the difference between misinformation and reliable news online. In 2017, the country became the first in Asia to adapt Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as part of basic education curriculum.

In Mongolia, more than two thirds of the population are internet users with 60% of the population active on at least one social media network — mainly Facebook. Though the country only has a population of just over 3 million people, according to the founder of Remo Media, it has 400 news websites. Namnandorj Bayaraa left his career in corporate finance to tackle a pressing issue in his native home and founded Remo Media. Remo stands for "read more" and its goal is to improve media and news literacy in Mongolia by partnering with local NGOs and schools and by email newsletters

and holding workshops. Detecting "fake news", navigating misinformation on social media and learning about journalism standards are all part of their mission which are primarily at the youth but now also includes reaching more remote communities in the countryside.

The Singaporean government introduced a Digital Media and Information Literacy Framework last year as part of non-legislative measures being rolled out to combat deliberate online falsehoods. The Ministry of Communications launched a website in July 2019 which aims to provide programme owners and agencies with tools to develop MIL programmes as well as for individuals to conduct a self-assessment checklist. The framework is meant to complement "a larger suite of measures aimed at making the digital media and information space safer" like a New Media Literacies toolkit that include lesson ideas, presentation slides and assessment items, to support teachers in primary and secondary schools, as well as junior colleges.



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The freedom to like,
comment and share comes
with risk and responsibility”

ONLINE CONTENT AND INFORMATION – ANALYSING SOURCES

by Eoghan SWEENEY

In the case of any breaking or ongoing news event, it is common for large amounts of related - or seemingly related - content to appear online. The nature of social media means any compelling content quickly gets shared; this can often snowball to the point that many people's lasting impression of an incident can be shaped by a relatively limited number of viral images or videos.

It is crucial, then, that media ensure any content published is authentic and, further, that the motivations behind its being shared are understood.

An important step in achieving this is ascertaining who originally created, and shared the content. This is relevant for several reasons:

Publication

When deciding to publish a piece of content found online, it is necessary to find out whether permission is needed. This may often not be the case, for example, if the content is embedded directly from a social platform, many of which expressly include such permissions in their terms of use. This should not, of course, be done carelessly: What if the person posting the content you have found has simply taken a copyrighted photograph or video that doesn't belong to them?

Verification

When verifying the authenticity of a piece of content, knowing the true source of it is important. This facilitates approaching them directly with questions, requesting raw versions of the content, or examining factors such as their location.

Motivation

Knowing the identity of the owner of content can allow you to evaluate their motivations for posting it. Whether there is a clear agenda is a help when looking into why something has been made public, as well as whether it has been captured in a way that may be prejudicial. Media, official sources, activists and chance passersby may all capture and present incidents in distinctive ways.

"Scraping"

Not to be confused with the use of the term in relation to data, "scraping" refers to the taking of content from its original source and reposting it, without accurate attribution.

"Scrapes" will often appear on channels or accounts that make use of dramatic captions or descriptions, and exhortations to share, like and subscribe. These are all indications that the scraper is attempting to maximise the monetisation of the content. Such efforts clearly introduce a distortion in terms of the reliability of the information.

When evaluating uploaders, you should consider:

- » Is there an obvious financial motivation?
- » Is the content consistent with other content on the account, or others held by the same person?
- » Are the content and descriptions consistent with other reports on the same incident?

Social Audit

Do you have a social media account of any kind? The answer is most likely “yes”. Do you have an account on only a single platform? Unlikely.

It is common to find people holding accounts on multiple online platforms. It is also common to see them share varying pieces of information — interests, location, contact details, etc. — in the profiles and content on these accounts. This often allows us to build a detailed picture of the person and their immediate networks.

The use of a single nickname or username across multiple platforms is not unusual. Services such as KnowEm or Namechk allow you to quickly check where a username is being used; you can then visit the relevant platform to look for evidence - photos, posts, friend lists, etc. - that it is the same person.

Twitter

Twitter is a frequently used vector for disinformation, and must be treated with caution. Some of the checks that can be carried out are:

- » When was the account opened? Accounts are sometimes set up specifically to disseminate hoaxes or other disinformation.
- » Is the profile photograph original? Reverse image search can help find if it has been taken from another source.
- » Check what other accounts it follows, and which follow it. This can reveal biases, as well as coordinated behaviour indicative of an agenda. Check for links to other social media accounts or sources of information.
- » Look back through previous tweets. Has there been a dramatic change in the tone or content of posts that could indicate that the account has changed hands or been compromised?

Online services such as Account Analysis, TweetBeaver and others can facilitate such checks. Spoonbill is a tool that allows tracking of changes made to Twitter profile information - this can give you a good indication of whether an account is misrepresenting itself.



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There are countless ways to dig up information. Often, the key to success is perseverance and imagination.

If you are largely satisfied that you have found the original source of the content, making contact can enable further checks, as well as help secure usage permission. Where possible, contact should be made discreetly to avoid causing embarrassment or distress, or compromising a person's safety.

It is always preferable to make such contact through private channels such as telephone, email or messaging platforms, rather than through publicly viewable messages on social media. About/profile sections should be scoured, and search engines leveraged, for contact details. If public outreach is unavoidable, try to use it to take the conversation to private channels as quickly as possible, by asking for contact details.

There are numerous services, such as Hunter — which has a limited but usable free element — that help to find emails of individuals. A user can enter a domain name of, for example, the company the person is known to work for, and the service searches online for any email addresses using that domain.

Be stubborn and creative

When investigating individuals, to ascertain whether they are a legitimate source or to make direct contact, there are countless ways to dig up information. Often, the key to success is perseverance and imagination. Some important tips are:

- » Don't forget to check About / Profile / Bio sections.
- » Reverse search profile images, background images and avatars.
- » Use search engines to look for names; include common or likely misspellings and variations.
- » Use specialist services to search for usernames.
- » Check descriptions and captions.
- » Check comments: conversation threads can provide revealing information.
- » Look for mentions of workplaces, schools or clubs, or photographs with clothing, badges or tags that suggest these.



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Europe perspective:

DISINFORMATION IN EUROPE

The European information landscape in 2019 was dominated by political issues. As part of its efforts to tackle online disinformation, the European Commission stressed the profound dangers: “It may have far-reaching consequences, cause public harm, be a threat to democratic political and policy-making processes, and may even put the protection of EU citizens’ health, security and their environment at risk”.¹

While the commission stressed the responsibility of member states to tackle targeted disinformation, it also stepped up efforts toward union-wide cooperation through a Rapid Alert System (RAS). Such a system was viewed as necessary in view of the importance of the first hours following the emergence of disinformation. The aim of the RAS - operating across a network of 28 national contact points - is to tackle disinformation through: “public information and awareness raising activities; flagging serious cases to online platforms: empowering researchers, fact-checkers and civil society; coordinated response and coordinated attribution”.²

The role of online platforms in the spread of such information was also clearly highlighted. As well as the use of the RAS to flag serious cases, the major players were urged to take proactive

steps to stem the flow of harmful disinformation. European Commissioner for Security Union Julian KING was pointedly critical of Facebook, whose approach he described as “patchy, opaque and self-selecting”.³

King dismissed the idea that privacy laws prevented a more aggressive approach by the platforms. Speaking at a press conference in March, he said: “Fake accounts do not have rights, so they are not covered by the GDPR. Facebook still has 116 million fake accounts on its platforms”.⁴

While much of the focus on dealing with disinformation was on tackling visible or relatively easily discovered rumours and claims on open social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, the challenge presented by private messaging platforms continued to grow. The very nature of such platforms, often end-to-end encrypted, means that penetrating networks and tracking disinformation to its source becomes far more difficult.

A survey carried out for nonprofit Avaaz illustrated this. In a report based on the run-up to the Spanish general election, Avaaz used crowdsourcing techniques to uncover the large volume of disinformation being spread via

1 Tackling online disinformation - <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/tackling-online-disinformation>

2 Rapid Alert System: Strengthening Coordinated and Joint Responses to Disinformation - https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/ras_factsheet_march_2019_0.pdf

3 Facebook accused by Brussels over ‘patchy’ attitude to fake news - <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/jan/29/facebook-accused-by-brussels-over-patchy-attitude-to-fake-news-nick-clegg>

4 Commission urges platforms to take action on fake accounts before EU elections - <https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/news/commission-urges-platforms-to-take-action-on-fake-accounts-before-eu-elections/>

messaging service WhatsApp. The study found that 9.6 million voters — 26.1 percent of the country's voting population — were likely to have seen political content through the app “that they considered false, intentionally misleading, racist, or inciting hatred or violence”.⁵ With almost 9 out of 10 people in the country using WhatsApp — 8 out of 10 on a daily basis — the scale of the challenge is clear.

Equally clear is that the challenge of disinformation is Europe is widespread and potentially very damaging. There is no reason to believe that interested actors will be in any way inclined to slow down, and every reason to believe that they will continue to develop and vary their approaches. The problem of disinformation is with us to stay; efforts to deal with it will have to be creative, constant and tenacious.

⁵ WhatsApp: Social Media's Dark Web - https://avaazimages.avaaz.org/Avaaz_SpanishWhatsApp_FINAL.pdf



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ONLINE VERIFICATION: ASSESSING VISUAL CONTENT

by Eoghan SWEENEY

We are bombarded daily by visual content. Countless images, still and moving, compete for our attention as we struggle to make sense of the deluge of information. Visual content also forms the backbone of memes, hoaxes and other forms of mis- and disinformation.

Improving our ability to evaluate the evidence in front of our eyes is therefore a crucial skill not just for journalists, but for the general public.

Images

Photographs and graphics are being manipulated, repurposed, and presented without their original context on a massive scale in the service of disinformation. What can we do to give ourselves the best chance of avoiding being misled?

There are three basic approaches:

- » Search
- » Look
- » Check

Search

The first step you should always take when confronted with an image that raises your suspicions is to carry out simple searches. Much of the visual content being used in hoaxes is repurposed and recycled again and again. Of course it is important to carry out your own evaluations, but very often, this may not be

necessary, and may be a waste of your valuable time. Why toil over the minutiae in order to find out information someone has already found, evaluated and presented in a neat package?

Carry out searches of keywords and descriptions of the content. This will frequently lead you to a previous debunk. Use this informal crowdsourcing to your advantage. Of course, you should not always take this information at face value: check whether the judgments make sense, and whether they come from a reputable source.

Look

Regardless of whether or not the information is available from another source, you should be able to make some judgments of your own. Close examination of an image often reveals evidence of manipulation. Look for:

- » Artefacts - Areas of anomalous pixels, blurring, abrupt edges etc.
- » Repeating patterns - parts of images are sometimes copied and pasted into other areas, for example, to make crowds look bigger or, as in one case, to make it look like a malfunctioning missile had launched as intended.
- » Anomalies - elements of the same photograph appearing to exhibit different resolution or quality.

Check

Probably the most widely used discipline in evaluating questionable viral content is reverse image search. Using free online tools, the user can check whether an image has previously appeared online. This can lead to conclusions as to whether an image has been manipulated, or is old and being reused out of context to support a false narrative.

The most commonly used reverse image search engines are from Google and Yandex. Many online verification practitioners report more effective results from Yandex, when it comes to faces and logos. Google, in its favour, has numerous filtering facilities, such as being able to delimit dates, concentrate on specific colours, or add text hints.

TinEye is another service occasionally used, but most reports place it well behind the big two in terms of effectiveness. Being familiar with all three is, however, helpful: there is no absolute rule about when one tool works better than another, and checking more than one can help.

As well as searching for whole images, it can be helpful to crop images and search for objects, logos and other elements. Key frames and thumbnail images extracted from videos can also be searched as a limited form of “reverse video search”.

Reverse image search can be carried out by dragging and dropping the image after downloading it, or by entering the image url. More efficient is installing a browser extension such as RevEye or Image Search Options: these allow you to right-click to search, and give you the option of multiple engines.

Video

When examining video, there are a number of features that should ring alarm bells. Any of these may be an indicator of manipulation:

- » Edits/jump cuts: Any time a video is not in a single take, there is no guarantee that what takes place before and after an edit occurred that way in real time.
- » Music, narration or other non-original sound: This can obscure sounds on the original video that may have helped to establish place, time or other details and is, of course, evidence that the video has been through at least some form of manipulation.
- » Overlaid logos or other graphics: These are sometimes used in a deliberate effort to prevent effective reverse image searching of thumbnails. Other similar tactics are cropping of the original video, or flipping it horizontally to create a “mirrored” version.
- » Unnatural behaviour: Do people - or animals - in the video behave in the way you would expect them to in that situation? If not, it could suggest they are acting or being coerced, or unaware of something else in the video because it was added artificially in post-production.

Geolocation

Ascertaining the location where a video or image was captured can be a very satisfying process, as it is possible to get incontrovertible confirmation of the information you are seeking.

In its simplest form, geolocation involves picking out details in the content that can be corroborated and confirmed using maps, images or other information. It is a skill that quickly becomes easier with practice.

The visual elements that can help verify a location are practically unlimited. Among the most commonly used are:

- » Architectural details
- » Street layouts
- » Statues, monuments, etc.
- » Street signs, shopfronts
- » License plates
- » Clothing, uniforms

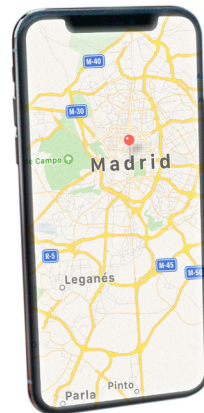
Examine the orientation and relative position of recognisable objects. This can help you put yourself in the shoes of the photographer or videographer and give you a clearer view of whether what you are seeing makes sense.

Practice improves awareness and focus. Learning to tune out from the incident depicted in order to examine background features is important.

- » Watching videos closely and carefully is essential - sometimes a fleeting detail can be decisive. Be aware of the camera panning, zooming and changing focus.
- » If you see a distinctive building or object, try doing text searches for that location. Phrases such as “Singapore monuments” or “Sarajevo churches” could lead to a blog, website or Wikipedia page with images you could use for corroboration.
- » Listen: Someone may mention a placename, or language — dialects or accents could help you narrow things down.



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MODULE 3: SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL CONTENT

JOURNALISM AND TECHNOLOGY

by Łukasz KROL

Nowadays, it's not only a person or group of people who will make investment decisions, shape traffic patterns, or even decide who does or does not get bail. Algorithms — or sets of instructions usually executed by a computer — are taking on bigger and bigger roles in those fields. And the greater their power, the more we must think about how to make them representative and keep them accountable.

It's tempting to think of computer code as apolitical, but reality is far more complicated. The very structure of our platforms shapes political outcomes. Internet sociologist Zeynep TUFEKCI, for example, argued that Facebook never unveiled a dislike button precisely because this could scare off advertisers, whose products could be criticised¹. The current Facebook reaction structure, with like and love on the left, is instead intended to create an atmosphere of overwhelming positivity on the site — good for advertisers, worse for journalists and activists who might need to report bad news. Big tech is also keen to ban violent imagery, even in cases such as war footage where it could be used to hold governments accountable. Once again, this decision has probably been shaped by advertiser interests.

Algorithms similarly reflect the biases of their creators. They do not exist independently of the world, but draw conclusions that are based on huge amounts of data. This data often reflects our prejudices, inequalities, or simply flawed incentive structures. All of which the algorithm learns from. In the US, for example, law enforcement sometimes uses algorithms for predictive policing. Computer systems try to figure out where crimes will happen and dispatch more police officers to such areas. Those algorithms are based on existing data about arrests and police activities, data which has been tainted by the biases of the police officers themselves.²

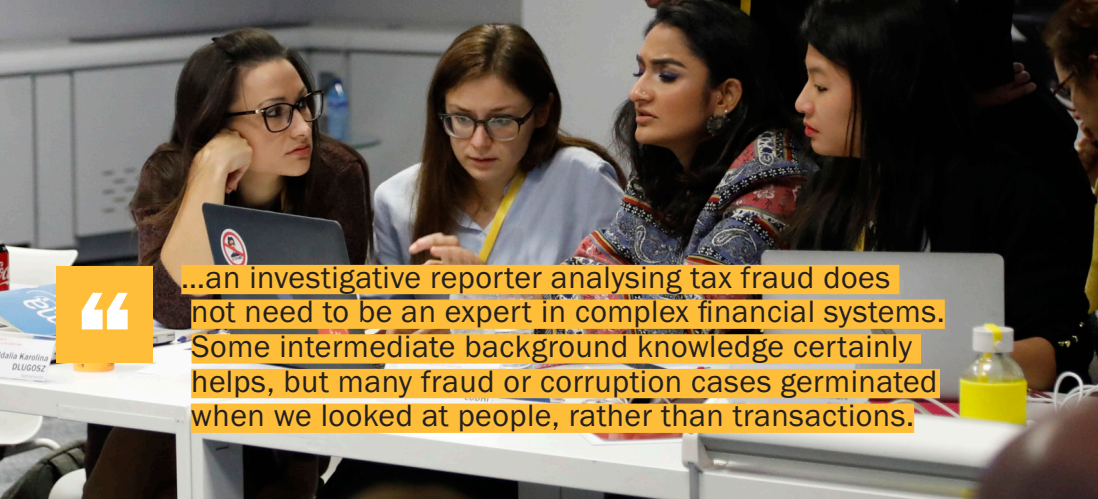
Humans are capable of critically examining data from a moral perspective; we can figure out how the society we want differs from the one we have. Algorithms cannot do that, and end up hard-coding, rather than challenging, our biases.



Algorithms similarly reflect the biases of their creators. They do not exist independently of the world, but draw conclusions that are based on huge amounts of data.

¹ Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*

² Rashida Richardson, Jason M. Schultz, Kate Crawford, "Dirty Data, Bad Predictions: How Civil Rights Violations Impact Police Data, Predictive Policing Systems, and Justice", *NYU Law Review*, <https://www.nyulawreview.org/online-features/dirty-data-bad-predictions-how-civil-rights-violations-impact-police-data-predictive-policing-systems-and-justice/>



“...an investigative reporter analysing tax fraud does not need to be an expert in complex financial systems. Some intermediate background knowledge certainly helps, but many fraud or corruption cases germinated when we looked at people, rather than transactions.”

Our intuitive reaction might be to shy away from algorithmic research, if we don't have a background in computer science. Algorithms, especially as presented in the media and stock images, look like scary walls of impenetrable computer code. This has made some journalists and social scientists wary of studying and analysing them in greater depth.

Still, an investigative reporter analysing tax fraud does not need to be an expert in complex financial systems. Some intermediate background knowledge certainly helps, but many fraud or corruption cases germinated when we looked at people, rather than transactions. This could be as simple as asking why a particular official or businessperson seems to live far above their declared income levels.

Analysing and reporting on algorithmic injustice can be done through similarly simple methods. You do not require in-depth knowledge of the math behind facial recognition to recognise that it is frequently biased against ethnic minorities. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) made a very apt case when they used a facial recognition

system used by law enforcement among others on members of the US Congress. The system misidentified several Congresspeople as convicted criminals, showing a higher false positive rate when applied to pictures of persons of color³. Publications such as *The Guardian* continued to report on similar findings⁴.

Studies of algorithmic radicalisation and disinformation can similarly be conducted in a somewhat low-tech manner. YouTube been suspected of being a radicalising influence, steering politically curious individuals towards increasingly extreme views. An excellent New York Times study proved that this was the case in Brazil. They did so by combining on-the-ground interviews with discussions with researchers who ran repeated YouTube sessions in a blank browser⁵.

Most tech firms will guard their algorithms and refuse to share their content (or even extensively document which data they were based on). They treat them as trade secrets. Journalists, activists, and even regulators are not allowed to peek into them, making technical analyses very difficult. This opens up a huge avenue for journalists who

3 Jacob Snow, "Amazon's Face Recognition Falsely Matched 28 Members of Congress With Mugshots, ACLU, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/privacy-technology/surveillance-technologies/amazons-face-recognition-falsely-matched-28>

4 Ali Breland, "How white engineers built racist code – and why it's dangerous for black people", *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/dec/04/racist-facial-recognition-white-coders-black-people-police>

5 Max Fischer, Amanda Taub, "How YouTube Radicalized Brazil", *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/11/world/americas/youtube-brazil.html>

would like to analyse the world of big tech and algorithms from a human, social, and cultural angle. Who is creating our algorithms? What communities do they come from and represent? What is their worldview on humanity and technology? And what incentives, if any, do they have to make sure that algorithms – and the data they are based on – reflect humanity's beautiful diversity?

In the past years, new reporting began to emerge on the links between big tech, the military, and border guards, especially in the US. Google, for example, once worked on Project Maven, which aimed to deploy image recognition for American military drones. It eventually withdrew from that project, following intensive reporting and employee pressure⁶. Microsoft has also been under much scrutiny for its work with border patrol services⁷, while Amazon stated that it plans to continue working with such clients⁸. The reporting on each one of those cases did

not need to pry open the black box of AI to be effective; all it needed to do was question the economic and political incentives of firms that work on algorithmic projects.

Finally – most of the writing, case studies, and analyses that deal with algorithms and data inequality are deeply US-centric. This has, in part, happened because most research institutes that deal with such matters are based there. At the same time, it provides some wonderful opportunities for reporters working in other parts of the world. Algorithms are capturing the public sphere all over the world. Questions of power, politics, and representation are often left unanswered. It's our role as activists, reporters, and media figures to bring those questions to the forefront of the public debate. And, as I have hopefully shown above, doing so requires a deep curiosity of humans, economics, and incentives – rather than solely technological details.

6 Erin Griffith, "Google Won't Renew Controversial Pentagon AI Project", *WIRED*, <https://www.wired.com/story/google-wont-renew-controversial-pentagon-ai-project/>

7 Sheera Frenkel, "Microsoft Employees Question C.E.O. Over Company's Contract With ICE", *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/26/technology/microsoft-ice-immigration.html>

8 Isobel Asher Hamilton, "Jeff Bezos says employee activists are wrong and Silicon Valley firms should feel comfortable doing business with the US military", *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/jeff-bezos-amazon-employee-activists-military-wrong-2019-12?IR=T>

12th ASEF
Journalists'
Seminar

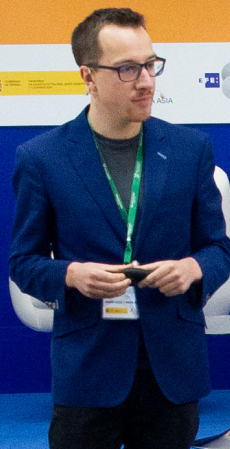


Journalists'
Seminar



Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age

12th ASEF
Journalists'
Seminar



ASEFJS12 ▶

ASEFJS12 ▶



The 12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar (ASEFJS12, 13-14 December 2019, Madrid) was organised by ASEF alongside the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEMFMM14), in partnership with the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAUEC), Casa Asia and Agencia EFE.

The highly successful and productive 2-day training-oriented event brought together 29 young journalists and media professionals from ASEF Partner countries: 23 participants, 2 observers from Spanish Local Media and 2 observers from Model ASEM.

Under the topic "Media Trust & Information in the Digital Age", ASEFJS12 also included ASEMFMM14 press coverage and interaction with other ASEMFMM14 side events such as ASEM Cultural Festival (#ASEMfest) and 9th Model ASEM.

HIGHLIGHTS VIDEO

[View on YouTube ►](#)

ASEFJS12 LIVE STREAMS

Friday, 13 December 2019

[View on YouTube ►](#)

Saturday 14 December 2019

[View on YouTube ►](#)

More information

[Learn more on ASEF.org ►](#)

Programme ▶

12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar (ASEFJS12)

Following the theme of the 9th ASEF Editors' Roundtable (ASEFERT9) — *“Exploring the Battlefronts of ‘Fake News’: A Tripartite Approach to the Fight Against Misinformation”* - the 12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar (ASEFJS12) continued along the same path by focusing on media trust and information.

Today's media climate is characterised by uncertainty, not least in terms of trustworthiness. It has become necessary for the public to regularly question all sources of information (media, governments, businesses, social networks, etc.) and think critically about how digital technology and social media platforms themselves can be conduits of information disorder.

With the focus on the topic of misinformation in the recent past, there is an increasing demand for media sources that are trustworthy. This is exemplified by the numerous media literacy initiatives that have been launched by governments and civil society organisations around the world. On the other hand, journalists too have a role to play in the fight against dis- and misinformation, by equipping themselves with modern tools of fact-checking and social media verification.

Synergy with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 seeks to *“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”*. Target 16.10 aims to *“Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”*.

It was with this principle of public access to information that the Journalists' Seminar is organised.

Agenda

As a primarily training-oriented event, the 12th ASEF Journalists’ Seminar (ASEFJS12) explored how a trust-based approach to reporting can be adopted and strengthened by media organisations and journalists in Asia & Europe.

The 2-day training-oriented event brought together young journalists and media professionals from ASEF Partner countries. The programme hoped address journalists’ needs and challenges by providing them with the tools needed to tackle disinformation in the digital age.

Through expert trainers’ presentations, panel discussions, case studies from participants’ countries and examination of the latest innovative media tools, participants acquired the necessary skills to create their own initiatives at home.

Programme Overview

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| FRIDAY 13 December 2019 |  Programme Begins |
| |  Training at Agencia EFE |
| |  Networking Dinner |
| SATURDAY 14 December 2019 |  Training at Agencia EFE |
| |  Institutional Lunch |
| |  Training Conclusions |



Agencia EFE

Official Venue of the 12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar

Agencia EFE is the first international news agency in Spanish and is considered the fourth most influential in the world. A multimedia news company with a network of hundreds of journalists worldwide, working 24 hours a day in over 181 cities in 120 countries. It is the Spanish media with the largest presence in Asia. This year (2019) EFE celebrates its 80th anniversary, eighty years of commitment to rigorous journalism, innovation and press freedom.

Agencia EFE Museum of News

Learning visit and interactive activities at EFE's Museum of News. The museum includes an old photo processing lab and specific areas to explain how to practice journalism in conflict zones. Its archives 12 million photographs dating back to 1857, and more than 23 million resources documenting the evolution of journalism.

Key Facts

982

Applicants



27

Attendees



23 Participants
Journalists, Entrepreneurs, Freelance media professionals

4 Observers
2 from local media
2 Model ASEM Resource Persons

25 ASEM Partner countries represented
Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Switzerland and Thailand



His Majesty King Felipe VI mentioned the 12th ASEF Journalists' Seminar in his opening speech during (ASEFM14).



ASEFJ12 participants were accredited as press for ASEFM14. They were able to attend the ASEFM14 Press Conference and managed to pose relevant questions.



ASEFJ12's Opening Ceremony was graced by the presence of H.E. Mr. Fernando VALENZUELA, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Spain



7



Trainers
& Speakers from...



3 Media Agencies
Agencia EFE, Spain
News Vista EPA-EFE
Malaysian News Agency



2 Private Companies
OSINT Essentials
Google News Lab



2 Academic Institutions
College of Europe
University Complutense



MEDIA COVERAGE

14K

Unique
pageviews

14K

Facebook
Reach

4.9K

LinkedIn Post
Impressions

1K

YouTube Live
Stream Views

46

Local Press
Articles

20M

Local Press
Audience



3 Participants
+ 2 Model ASEM 9 Participants
interviewed by TVE, Spanish National TV & CGTN, China Global Television Network

2 Speakers
interviewed by Agencia EFE
/ News Vista International Service

Partners



Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAEUEC)

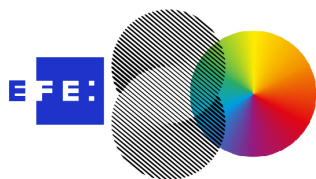
exteriores.gob.es



Casa Asia is a public consortium consisting of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, the Generalitat of Catalonia, and the Barcelona and Madrid city councils.

Casa Asia aims to contribute to better understanding between Spain and Asian countries and to promote institutional, economic, cultural and educational relations as well as encouraging exchanges in the domains of culture, ideas and projects of shared interest. The institution is nowadays a reference and meeting point in Spain with regard to one of the world's most dynamic regions: Asia-Pacific. Its headquarters are in Barcelona, and it also has a centre in Madrid.

www.casaAsia.es



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www.efe.com

Trainers

Trainer

Mr Yusof ABDUL-RAHMAN

Dig Deeper Media, EuroNews,
Malaysian National News Agency

About

“Yusof Abdul-Rahman is a journalist with 20 years experience at the Associated Press. He has since worked at Euronews and was involved in a WhatsApp funded project in India that looked into disinformation and misinformation within closed-messaging groups during the election this year. With a keen interest in the way technological innovation affects social behaviour he is currently a senior consultant working at Malaysia’s National News Agency (Bernama) on convergence strategy and news transformation”.



Social



[Visit LinkedIn Profile »](#)

SESSION INFORMATION

Combatting dis/misinformation through Media & Information Literacy (MIL)

“Assessing the role of news media in raising awareness against dis/misinformation and how to provide tools for the public, as well as governments, to arm themselves with the ability to manage it. Rapid and constant technological innovation have brought about significant changes in news consumption. Journalists and news organisations today share space with unreliable and unchecked actors within an information ecosystem built on leveraging engagement. We look at how efforts to engage our audience and view them as a community can form part of the strategy to improve MIL and helping society navigate the uncertain waters of today’s media landscape”.



Mr Eoghan SWEENEY

Independent Consultant and Trainer

About

“Eoghan Sweeney is an independent consultant and trainer specialising in the verification of online content and information, with more than two decades of experience in print, broadcast and online media. He spent six years with groundbreaking social media news agency Storyful. He followed this with a year and a half as Global Training Director with First Draft. He provides training and education in this field, as well as digital security, and created and maintains OSINT Essentials, a website dedicated to online investigative work”.

Social



@buileshuibhne

SESSION INFORMATION

Is it true? Fact-checking

“A look at the ways in which disinformation is created and disseminated, as well as techniques and tools used to fight back by analysing claims and the sources from which they emanate and spread”.

Social Media Verification

“Assessing visual information online, using maps and other free tools to carry out geolocation and chronolocation techniques, and ascertain what a piece of content is, and what it is not”.



Dr Myriam REDONDO

Professor,
Complutense University

About

“Freelance journalist, OSINT advanced technician and IR associate lecturer at Complutense University, Redondo has been introducing Spanish journalists into digital verification since 2012 through workshops at educative centers, professional associations and media (in-company courses). She authored the book “Verificación digital para periodistas. Manual contra bulos y desinformación internacional” (UOC, 2018). She collaborates with Deutsche Welle Akademie for trainings in Africa and Asia and contributes to the TVE program “Los Desayunos” on topics related to disinformation”.

Social



@globograma

SESSION INFORMATION

Digital verification & OSINT, challenges ahead

“A lie can travel halfway around the World while the truth is putting on its shoes”. More than two centuries since this idea started circulating, that is still a fact: digital falsehood is more agile and powerful than clarifications in gaining people’s minds and hearts. This session will provide some suggestions to better face the enemy, to debunk as professionally as possible and to avoid risks posed by disinformation contents (amplification, private data disclosure...). Digital verification and OSINT are finally welcomed with great expectation in the newsrooms, but they are not free of limitations. Journalists must know them to move fast and efficiently”.



Mr Pablo SANGUINETTI

Teaching Fellow
Google NewsLab

About

“Pablo Sanguinetti is a writer and journalist with an international career and programming skills. He worked for 12 years with the news agency DPA as chief correspondent in Berlin and later in Madrid, while simultaneously pushing forward the implementation of digital tools in the newsroom. He has also regularly collaborated with newspapers such as La Nación in Argentina and El Mundo in Spain. Since May 2019 he works at the Google News Lab as a Teaching Fellow for Spain and Portugal”.



Social



@pcsanguinetti

SESSION INFORMATION

Digital Tools for Online Verification

“Detecting fake news and verifying online content have become crucial journalism skills. This is especially true during election seasons where false news becomes extremely prevalent.

This session will discuss the tools available from Google that journalists can use for “fact-checking”. These tools can also be used in online research for verifying images and videos — confirming origin, location, or provenance of the content”.



Mr Łukasz KRÓL

Digital Projects Coordinator,
Vice-Rector's Office (Natolin (Warsaw) campus)
College of Europe

About

“With a background in technology and political science, Łukasz studies the ways in which we can bridge our technological and social realities. He is a researcher, lecturer and workshop facilitator.

Łukasz currently focuses on the wider relationship between humans and technology, and how this frames our understanding of matters such as disinformation and algorithms. “



Social



SESSION INFORMATION

AI & Algorithms Shaping Information Consumption in the Digital Age

“The way in which we learn about and conduct the discussions that are the lifeblood of journalism & public life has radically changed over the past few years. The content that reaches us often passes not through the hands of human editors but through the sorting and recommendation mechanisms of algorithmic gatekeepers. This session will look at some of the biases and shortcomings of the algorithms that influence increasingly large parts of our lives. It will also discuss the power, politics, and inequalities embedded within algorithmic capitalism and what we can do about them”.



SESSION INFORMATION

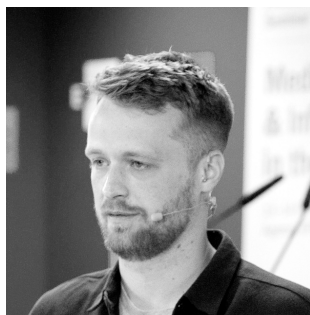
Exchange of Asia-Europe Values & Experiences **Fact-checking Project & Experiences: Agencia EFE**

Agencia EFE is the first international news agency in Spanish and is considered the fourth most influential in the world. A multimedia news company with a network of hundreds of journalists worldwide, working 24 hours a day in over 181 cities in 120 countries. It is the Spanish media with the largest presence in Asia. This year (2019) EFE celebrates its 80th anniversary, eighty years of commitment to rigorous journalism, innovation and press freedom.



Mr Jose Manuel SANZ

International Relations Director,
Agencia EFE



Mr Jake THREADGOULD

Multimedia Editor,
EFE-EPA

Participants & Observers

PARTICIPANTS

AUSTRALIA

Ms Catherine Angela BOURIS

Freelance Journalist

About

“Catherine Bouris is a freelance journalist based in Sydney. She has written for the Sydney Morning Herald and the Saturday Paper and created the Young Australian Writers Facebook group”.

Social



@catherinebouris



[Visit Website »](#)



Largest Online Space for Journalists in Australia

“As the creator of the largest online space for journalists in Australia, I would like to offer free or low-cost workshops that will equip journalists with the skills needed to fight fake news and misinformation. These would include workshops on verification tools, finding reputable sources, fact-checking, spotting fake news on social media, and filing FOI requests”.

“Most training courses that teach journalists these skills are aimed at mid-career journalists and are expensive; I would focus on emerging journalists and work to keep costs low”.

PARTICIPANTS

BANGLADESH

Ms Sohara MEHROZE

Freelance Journalist

About

“Sohara Mehroze Shachi is a Bangladeshi freelance journalist. She is the winner of SEC’s 2016 Asian Young Environmental Journalist of the Year award”.

Social



@soharamehroze



Visit Website »



Dhaka Hub of the Global Shapers Community

“Together with Dhaka Hub, Sohara is implementing *Treelionaire*. The project aims to increase climate change awareness in the youth, as well as provide training to become environmental journalists. Further, it actively engages its audience in city greening and tree planting activities which help further promote climate consciousness in Bangladesh. This is particularly important as in the quest for development, Bangladesh is losing a lot of its greenery and is becoming even more vulnerable to climate change, and youth need to be advocates for climate action, given that they will be bearing the brunt of climatic impacts”.

“What makes Treelionaire unique is its ease of scalability and replicability, and it has already been replicated in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan through Global Shapers”.

BELGIUM

Ms Nadia TJAHJA

Freelance Ghostwriter / Educator On News Literacy

About

“Nadia Tjahja designs and teaches curriculums on media and news literacy. Furthermore, Nadia is a ghostwriter for institutions and organisations”.

Social



@ntjahj



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Challenging Violent Extremism: Newsworthy

“In 2016, Nadia was Agency Coordinator and Project Leader of a campaign aimed at challenging violent extremism through systematic fact checking and source verification. We provided source verified news articles, training information on source verification and outreach programmes designed to teach source verification skills to youth. At Newsworthy, we believe that with the right tools in hand, everyone can play a role in combatting extremism. A couple team members established The Alethea Collective which continues to work on designing and providing media and news literacy training and outreach programmes for youth internationally”.

“The campaign was awarded with the second prize by the US State Department and Facebook for the P2P: Challenging Extremism Competition”.

PARTICIPANTS

BULGARIA

Ms Eleonora TAHOVA

Journalist - Editor, Reporter
Bulgarian National Radio

About

“Eleonora Tahova works at the Bulgarian National Radio as an editor, reporter and host of weekly information programs. Mentor of students & a participant at the national “Journalists at school” program”.

Social



—



Visit Website »



21st Century ChangeMakers: NexGen Media Explore Strategies for Ethical and Accountable Reporting

“Project goals:

Examine model programs and social campaigns that promote civic engagement and youth leadership; Demonstrate the prevalence of disinformation and misinformation in social media, and identify strategies to enhance social media discernment among youth; Examine the importance of pluralism, tolerance, and volunteerism as components of civic life; and Explore advocacy and leadership strategies targeted for youth that facilitate social empowerment and justice.

Themes:

Digital Journalism and Alternative Reporting; Integration of Traditional and New Media Platforms; The Role of Academia Encouraging Ethical Reporting; Citizen Journalism; Broadcasting for Specific Audiences; Local Efforts to Counter Misinformation; Ethics in Journalism; National and International Organizations Advocating for Press Freedom”

“Project meetings emphasized the role of journalism to combating misinformation”.

CAMBODIA

Ms Sokserei EAN

Communication and Public Relations Officer
The National Bank of Cambodia, Communication and Public
Relations Division of Economic Research and International
Cooperation Department, Cambodia

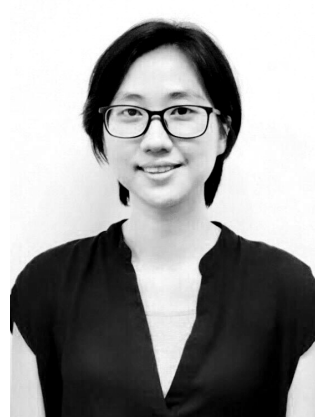
About

“As a Communication and PR Officer, I work to ensure the accessibility and effective delivery of accurate and trustworthy information to the publics”.

Social



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Media Literacy Toolkit for Newsrooms

“I am currently working on a collaborative project to develop the central bank’s communication platforms, in particular its official website to make it a reliable source of information, more accessible, informative, and user-friendly so that both external and internal publics, especially the people we serve could access to the authentic, trustworthy, accurate, and useful information available on the website with ease and in a timely manner. Technically, to achieve the objectives we set above, we are applying a people-oriented approach focusing on four main elements—information accessibility, quality of the contents, navigation and design of the user-interface, and interactively innovative programmes designed to help them understand the development of banking and financial sectors and thereafter allows them to make their informed decisions more easily and responsively”.

“It is a strategic effort to address information disorder via technology and public-oriented approach and also serves as a tool to build familiarity, transparency, and trust”.

PARTICIPANTS

CHINA

Ms XU Miao

Freelancer
Tencent News

About

“Yenching Scholar from the Yenching Academy of Peking University. Worked for CCTV and New York Times and currently focusing on the issue of China’s education equality”.

Social



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



21st Century ChangeMakers

“The issue that caught most people’s eyes in the past summer may well be the large-scale protest against the Chinese central government as well as the special administrative region governance happening in Hong Kong. What I’m working on now is to track the process that how media coverage gradually led to emotional polarization. I want to figure out the communication pattern in this case”.

“This project is perfect for us to understand the communication pattern in the digital age”.

GERMANY

Ms Natalie MAYROTH

Reporter in Germany and India

Among others taz, Wochenzeitung, VICE

About

“Natalie Mayroth (b. 1986) is a German-Iranian journalist living between Mumbai and Berlin. In the past, she has reported from China, India, Sri Lanka and Germany from culture to politics”.

Social



@netizenmay



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Plastic Shipping Route Research

“In Germany in many municipalities, you will find a yellow bin for plastics. We learnt, we just need to separate plastic trash at home and all will be good. The “Green Dot”, a license symbol of a European industry recycling system did a good job on marketing. But experts argue that Germany doesn’t actually recycle as much waste as statistics suggest regarding plastic packaging. We wanted to believe in the myth, that Germany is a recycling champion. But why are we still shipping tons of plastic trash to Asia every year? According to the industry magazine EUWID, Germany exported 180.000 tons of plastic in 2018. 38 per cent of that was shipped to Asia and it’s not even listed were 30 per cent of the trash went to. Most probably other Asian countries are included. And this is my part. I started a research on tracking the route of plastics shipped from Germany to India together with the Mumbai-based journalist Chaitanya Marpakwar (on-going research)”.

“Do you ever hear of the Europ-Asia plastic track?”

PARTICIPANTS

GREECE

Ms Athina KOROVESI

International & European Affairs Specialist, Journalist.
Communications Manager, ICBSS, Athens.

Columnist, PolitisOnline.

Head, Anna Lindh Foundation for Southern & Western Greece.

About

“Athina Korovesi, Journalist-International & European Studies (MSc). Journalism & New Media. International Centre for Black Sea Studies. Head, Anna Lindh Found. for South. & West. Greece”

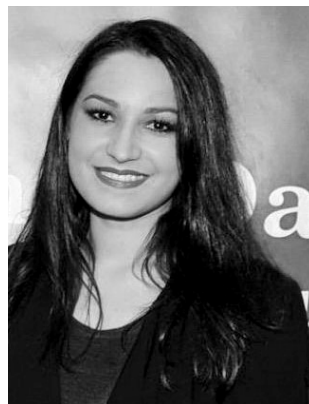
Social



@AthinaKorovesi



Visit Website »



Everyday Journalism

“Nowadays, journalism is developed in an uncertain media climate. Being deeply interested in contributing to facing misinformation, disinformation and the plague of Fake News, my intention is to inform the public about these challenges and to motivate young people to check the facts in each aspect of their life. This should be a life's attitude. Greek society could be characterised as an example of this situation. Recent years greek politics suffer from all the above, but contrary to this greek people & especially the youth want to be correctly informed by greek media & social media. My experience in journalism and my everyday talks with people & greek politicians has shown me that as nation we have to move steps forward to handle this. In this framework, I am constantly working by writing opinion articles and taking interviews in order to further contribute to the elimination of these phenomena and for transferring theory into practice”.

“I am trying with great zeal to capture the reality of greek society, politics & media through articles, discussions and interviews with people working in all sectors”.

INDIA

Mr RANJAN Akhil

Fact-Check reporter

Agence France-Presse (AFP), News Agency, France

About

“I am a Delhi-based AFP Fact-Check Reporter and Google-certified Fact-Check Trainer with experience of over nine years of working with national and international media”.

Social



@akhilr23

[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)

Digital Literacy Workshop

“As a Fact-Check Reporter at AFP, I primarily handle false claims that are spread through video and visual content over social media, by using online tools of photo, video and geolocation verification. I am also part of the Google News Initiative (GNI) India Trainers Network and conduct independent workshops for media professionals on verification tools and best practices as a Google-certified fact-check trainer. I held over 12 workshops for media students and fellow journalists in Delhi and near by cities ahead of general elections in India this year to spread awareness and equip them with fact-checking tools to quell ‘fake news’ and rumours spread in run to the polls. I plan to take the initiative to smaller cities and towns and hold several workshops on fact-checking there as several states in India are gearing up for the local assembly polls in the coming months”.

“India saw several violent incidents over rumours in the recent past. Hence, I feel digital literacy as an urgency”.

PARTICIPANTS

INDONESIA

Mr ADI Renaldi

Staff Writer

VICE Indonesia

About

“Renaldi has been covering terrorism and religious extremism since 2013. He joined VICE Asia in September 2016. His beats range from LGBTQ issues, to environment”.

Social



@adi_ren_aldi



Visit Website »



Student Protests

“This project aims to reveal how a string of student protests rejecting controversial laws have escalated beyond conventional street protests. During the student protests, which first took place on September 23 in many cities across Indonesia days after the government passed the revised anti-corruption law, groups of cyber army took to Twitter to promote competing hashtags.”

“This maybe the most recent journalistic research focusing on how the spread of disinformation has pivotal role in dividing public opinion”.

ITALY

Mr Gianluca LIVA

Editor / Developer
Factcheckers

About

“Gianluca Liva is a freelance science journalist. He holds an MA in Contemporary History and a master in Science Communication. Regular contributor for various scientific magazines”.

Social



@livagianluca



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Lesson Plan Development for International Factchecking Network

“On behalf of the International Factchecking Network, Gianluca Liva recently developed a lesson plan for high school students, which was published and disseminated by the Poynter Institute in the occasion of the second International Fact Checking Day (April 2nd, 2018). The lesson plan consists of a discussion game that has been so far translated in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian.

From the beginning of 2019, Liva started to work, on behalf of Pagella Politica and the International Fact-Checking Network, on the design of an educational game for primary schools. It will be a game that aims to develop the critical spirit through the mechanisms of metacognition. The game will allow students to grasp the main aspects of news verification, through research work and peer education. The intention is to conclude the first phase of development by the first part of 2020”.

“In general, educational activities are “self-contained” and not playable more than once. The game I’m developing will, instead, be repeatable and replayable indefinitely”.

PARTICIPANTS

LATVIA

Ms Vita DREIJERE

Lecturer of Journalism, University of Latvia

Editor, *mansmedijs.lu.lv*

Freelance Journalist

About

“Lecturer at the University of Latvia Faculty of Social sciences Department of Communication science. Teaching various journalism courses”.

Social



@Vita_Dreijere



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Journalism Courses

“Different issues related to the topic are included in the journalism study program and in my study courses. Before she started to teach journalism she worked in Latvian daily newspaper. Journalism is difficult job and the same time journalism is the best job in the world.”

“Journalism is a difficult job and the same time journalism is the best job in the world”.

LITHUANIA

Mr Lukrecijus TUBYS

Journalist

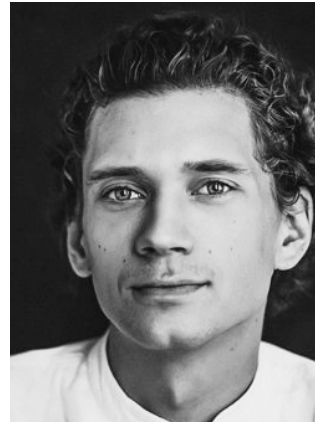
15min

About

“A journalist writing for Lithuanian news website 15min.lt. Love investigative reporting, storytelling and podcasts”.

Social


[Visit website »](#)

[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)


Patikrinta 15min

“Patikrinta 15min–is the first fact checking project in all three Baltic States, created in 2016, just before Lithuanian Parliament election. In 2018 Patikrinta 15min became a signatory of IFCN Code of principles. Patikrinta 15min is a part of 15min - the second largest online media outlet in Lithuania”.

“In Lithuanian context, we were the first ones to do fact checking as a brand ‘Patikrinta 15min’ (checked by 15min) and still are the leading media outlet”.

PARTICIPANTS

MALAYSIA

Ms Zunaira SAIEED

Producer

Star Media Group, Media Organisation, Malaysia

About

“A producer with a proven track record in print, digital and broadcast media specialising in business and economic affairs. Reported stories from Japan, Singapore and the UK”.

Social



@zunairasaieed



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Handling Fake News

“Apart from Nuclear warfare and climate change, fake news has been identified as the third existential threat to humanity. Malaysia should play a key role to curb the abuses and dangers of fake news, hate speech, disinformation and misinformation that can have impact on the social harmony of the country.”

“Fake news is an imminent threat to the world”

MONGOLIA

Mr Namnandorj BAYARAA

Chief Executive Officer
Remo Media

About

“Namnandorj started Remo Media to elevate quality of journalism and media literacy education in Mongolia”.

Social



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)

REMO Media

“Key project with the biggest possible long term project we’re working on in Mongolia is developing media and information literacy curriculum and training teachers who will go on to teach students in the future. Media and information literacy is a topic that has never been taught in Mongolia. With challenging local media environment rife with disinformation and political propaganda, it is crucial that communities receive reliable information and become discerning consumers of media. We are now tasked with developing curriculum for local teachers and making sure they’re equipped with necessary skills and knowledge to educate future students. We are also working on studies on news consumption habits. Remo sends out daily email newsletter covering global/local news in Mongolian”.



“We were a communist country until 1991. With 90% of population active on social media you get unique examples of disinformation”.

PARTICIPANTS

NETHERLANDS

Ms Idalia Karolina DLUGOSZ

Communications & Campaigns Intern
International Federation of Journalists

About

“Hello fellow participants! I am a MA journalism student at Leiden University and currently an intern at the International Federation of Journalists in Brussels”.

Social



@Idalia_D



[View LinkedIn Profile »](#)



Factchecking Strategies & Tools Development

“As a student in journalism, I am always interested in new solutions to improve the credibility of news media and strengthening the ties between journalists and the public. During my master’s degree in journalism, I have learned the importance of fact-checking, as well as how much work goes into figuring out the truth . Now as an intern at the Communications & Campaigns department of the International Federation of Journalists, I am involved with developing new strategies and tools for journalists worldwide. I am interested in how media professionals can build trust in their communities, not only through fact-checking, but also through the use of constructive journalism”.

“My work at the IFJ provides tools and information for journalists so they can fight ‘false-news’”.

PAKISTAN

Ms Annam Khawer LODHI

Islamabad Correspondent
Soch

About

“An Islamabad-based digital investigative journalist with over 200 by-lines. She is currently investigating how the digital space is transforming information”.

Social



@AnnamLOdhi



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The adverse effects of social media

“How social media applications are being used to propagate certain ideas. Popular social websites are being used by certain groups to flourish their ideologies and incapacitate users who are working against them. My project revolves around trying to identify these groups, their mechanisms and work with social media organizations to ban and/or remove their content; along with spreading awareness about their intentions”.

“It is an in-depth research project, where I not only explore the digital aspects but also how these groups adversely affect the lives of users”.

PARTICIPANTS

PHILIPPINES

Dun Oliver (Concha) ABIERA

Founder and Executive Director
YABONG Philippines

About

“A Mindanao-based social media marketing specialist who founded an organization built to educate and empower youth in the use of social media and create sustainable projects resolving problems in the Philippines”.

Social



@dunabiera



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YABONG Philippines

“A non-profit organization which aims to educate and empower the youth to become future-ready agents of 21st century. With the objective to expand, empower, and enable communities to be responsible social media users, YABONG specializes in crafting impact-based projects and incorporates media and information literacy on digital campaigns, leadership camps, and project incubation programs”.

“Unlike any other initiatives, YABONG focuses on proper media consumption among the youth — the most vulnerable sector in the digital age”.

POLAND

Mr Patryk ZAKRZEWSKI

Fact-checker, Educator and Project Coordinator
Demagog Association, Fact-Checking Organisation, Poland

About

“Patryk Zakrzewski works in Demagog Association where he coordinates the Fact-Checking Academy, an educational project aimed at developing media literacy skills in students and teachers”.

Social

@zakrzewskipat



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**Demagog / Fact-Checking Academy**

“Based on our experience in fact-checking, we have decided to establish a news literacy project called the Fact-Checking Academy. Our goal is to provide students with basic and intermediate level skills to analyse media content critically. For that reason, we organize workshops with students across the country. We focus on three main areas that include distinguishing fake news from truth, fact-checking, and selecting reliable sources. Students are encouraged not only to discuss these topics, but also to analyse real life examples and draw conclusions for the future. With our workshops, we have already reached to over 2.5k students in the whole country and we are going to increase this number significantly thanks to a new e-learning platform”.

“Our project is unique because it draws on the experience of the first fact-checking organization in Poland and thus remains independent and unbiased”.

PARTICIPANTS

ROMANIA / HUNGARY

Mr Istvan DEAK

Editor foreign affairs

Evenimentul zilei, mainstream national quality newspaper, Romania

About

“Journalist, former stagiaire of the Press Unit of the EP. Foreign desk editor, editor for a multimedia online news platform. Member of Digital Communication. Board member at SEEMO”.

Social



@IstvanDeak85



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EPRIE Fund

“The Korea Verband together with the support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung created the EPRIE Project Fund (EPF). This fund is for members of the EPRIE alumni network. It aims to catalyze and spread the spirit of EPRIE in the regions and maximize the impact of EPRIE through supporting innovative cross-border and cross-regional collaborative projects developed together by members from the EPRIE alumni network”.

“It is the first attempt to build a network and start a cooperation between young media professionals from Europe and East Asia”

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Ms Maria STROITELEVA

Freelance

Vc.ru, Online Media

About

“My specialization is Data Journalism. Also I work as freelance journalist in Vc.ru. Vc — online media about business, startups, innovation, marketing and technology”.

Social


[Play Fake Game »](#)

[Visit Website »](#)


Fakegame.ru

“The main aim of the game is to increase the level of media literacy among students and other groups of people. The designer and programmer helped me to create this game. We had been creating the game for about 4 months. I read literature and articles about fakes and media literacy to create rules that help recognize fake news. This is the most difficult and interesting project in my life”.

“I created a game dealing with fakes.”

PARTICIPANTS

SWITZERLAND

Mr Luca STEINMANN

War correspondent

Limes- Italian Magazine for Geopolitics, Corriere del Ticino (Switzerland), Swiss National TV RSI

About

“Luca Steinmann, freelance journalist, lecturer and political analyst”

Social



@luca_steinmann1



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Use of Information in War Areas

“As university lecturer teaching at the Rome Business School and at the University of Milan (Italy) I am developing lectures, seminars and masters about the use of information in war areas. I am especially focusing on how the use of information flows and the creation of sources can influence the conflict. In order to get the deepest knowledge possible about it I have been travelling as a journalist in different war areas in the past few years, focusing on the war in Syria in particular.”

“Not many independent journalists have access to war areas and even less journalist study the information flows from the ground.”

THAILAND

Ms Chanintorn PENSUTE

Chiang Mai and Bangkok

Infinity Podcast. Media and Content Agency, Thailand

About

“Chanintorn Pensute is a founder of “Infinity Podcast”, a podcast channel which discusses about education, business, politics, international relations, and lifestyle”.

Social



@infinitypodcas1



Visit Website »



Podcast Channel

“In 2019, I created a podcast called “Countdown”. Together with prominent professors in politics, I interviewed youth activists about topics in Thailand”.

“My project involves politicians, academics, and young activists.”



@pauguisado

Paula GUIADO

Data and investigative reporter
El Mundo

At El Mundo I work in two main areas. First, I'm part of the newspaper's data unit, El Mundo Data, where I work with all kind of data to produce stories and visualizations on all kind of topics. Second, I coordinate the work of El Mundo within the European Investigative Collaborations (EIC) network, which develops medium and long term investigations.



@anagomezparra



Visit Website »

Ana GOMEZ

Author
Newtral.es

Journalist. Previously at @EFEnoticias, @elconfidencial and @opinno.

Currently working for @Newtral on @pronostika_ project.



Paul SEDILLE

Founder

EurAsianVision newsletter

Paul Sedille is a journalist and filmmaker based in Hong Kong, founder of the EurAsianVision newsletter. A graduate of the Beijing Film Academy, Sciences Po Paris, and Sorbonne University (Paris VI), Paul's work focuses on political and cultural dynamics across the EurAsian space. He has significant on-the-ground experience in China and throughout key hubs of the New Silk Road.



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Johannes DE BRUYCKER

Founder

The Caravan's Journal

Johannes De Bruycker is a freelance documentary photographer, video maker and founder of The Caravan's Journal. He combines his education with international projects, in search of intense stories of relationships between people and their environment. He has worked with National Geographic photographer Dos Winkel, photo agency NOOR and he collaborated on Johan Grimonprez' documentary SHADOW WORLD on international arms trade.



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