

# GIVE FACTS A FIGHTING CHANCE

A global playbook for .....  
teaching news literacy

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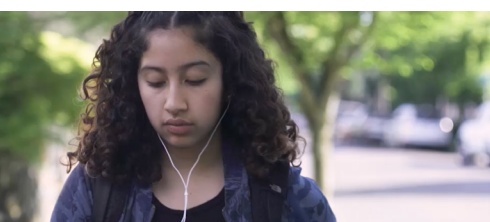
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We are grateful to Campbell Brown and the Facebook Journalism Project for supporting the production of this global playbook.

And finally, we appreciate the assistance of the Facebook Journalism Project and the International Center for Journalists in connecting us with nonprofits around the world that are eager to spread the news literacy message. Thank you.

— The News Literacy Project



# Foreword

The worldwide pandemic of misinformation and disinformation is, to be blunt, a global public health crisis.

We have seen it play out with deadly consequences in India and Myanmar. We have seen it manifested in the 2016 presidential election in the United States and in elections in the former Soviet republics, Western Europe and Brazil. And we have seen it in the growing international demand for our [Checkology® virtual classroom](#).

To help stem the spread of this virus, we have put together what we are calling a “global playbook.” Our hope is that our experiences in the field of news literacy — and the lessons we have learned — will be useful to you as you introduce or expand news literacy programs in your community and country.

I started the News Literacy Project in 2008 for two reasons. I was concerned about the large quantities of misleading (and often outright false) information that my daughter, then a teenager, was finding online. And as a reporter for the Los Angeles Times, I was caught up in the wrenching change

that the newspaper industry was experiencing — and feared that unless young people developed an understanding of, and appreciation for, quality journalism, deep and accurate reporting would be overtaken by rumor, spin, propaganda, hoaxes and other falsehoods. Over time, we have discovered that these issues are not simply local or national — they are found in every country around the world.

We do recognize the limitations of this guide. The News Literacy Project is based in the United States, and our curriculum and resources — which include [The Sift](#), our weekly newsletter for educators, and the tools on our website, [newslit.org](#) — were designed for a U.S. audience. We realize that social, political, educational and cultural challenges differ from country to country — so we hope that you will use this guide by adapting what is relevant and useful to your situation.

To be honest, we were surprised by the international reach of our programs. With no marketing efforts outside the United States, the first version of Checkology, launched in May 2016, attracted registrations from teachers in 93 countries — and



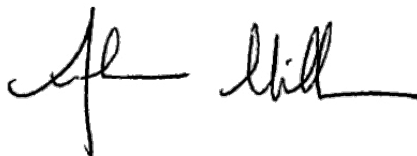
Alan Miller, the founder of the News Literacy Project, discusses his Pulitzer Prize-winning series, “The Vertical Vision,” during a visit to Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, in October 2015.

we took that global presence into account as we developed version 2.0, released in August 2018. It includes a new lesson on press freedoms around the world (featuring videos of journalists in 10 countries talking about their work) and a Spanish-language version of “Practicing Quality Journalism,” one of our most popular lessons. We’re also consulting with 10 dynamic nonprofits in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, North America and South America to help them introduce or expand news or media literacy education in their countries.

As we begin to reach a wider global audience, we want to learn from you. Please send us your feedback on this guide and on news literacy education in general: What is useful? What is not? What would you like to see more of? What is missing? We would also like to hear about your experiences working in

this field in your country, and welcome stories of challenges as well as successes.

Your efforts to create a more news-literate society are exactly what the world needs today. We hope we can help you achieve this objective, and we look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. C. Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alan C. Miller  
Founder and CEO

## Chapter One

# History of the News Literacy Project

In 2006, Alan Miller — a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter in the Los Angeles Times' bureau in Washington, D.C. — was invited to discuss his work as a journalist, and why it mattered, with 175 sixth-grade students at his daughter's middle school. He went into Pyle Middle School in Bethesda, Maryland, concerned about two things: how his daughter, Julia, was accessing and evaluating the tsunami of information of such varying credibility, transparency and accountability on the internet, and whether — amid the wrenching transformation in the news business — there would continue to be an appreciation of quality journalism.

As he left the building that spring morning, he came to a realization: If many journalists brought their expertise and experience to classrooms across America, it could be extremely meaningful. That evening, Julia brought home 175 handwritten thank-you notes. Together, as they read each one aloud, Miller could see what had resonated.

Two weeks later, he returned to Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, for his 30th college

reunion. There he participated in a long-scheduled panel on the future of journalism moderated by Alberto Ibargüen, a 1966 graduate of Wesleyan and the president of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the largest funder of journalism education in the United States.

After the session, Miller told Ibargüen that he had the beginnings of an idea that he would like to share. Ibargüen connected him with Eric Newton, Knight's vice president for journalism. Over the next 18 months, they spoke periodically, tugging and pulling on Miller's idea until Knight was ready to award him a founding grant for the News Literacy Project (NLP).

(Coincidentally, and unbeknownst to Miller, in 2006 Knight had given a larger grant to Stony Brook University in New York for a program that would teach "news literacy" to college students. Hence, Newton effectively named a new field of study, and Knight's support launched it. Howard Schneider, the founder of Stony Brook's Center for News Literacy, became a founding member of NLP's board.)

"I thought it was great when you said a newspaper was like a buffet, with so many articles you can read. I loved your presentation, and I hope you come again soon."

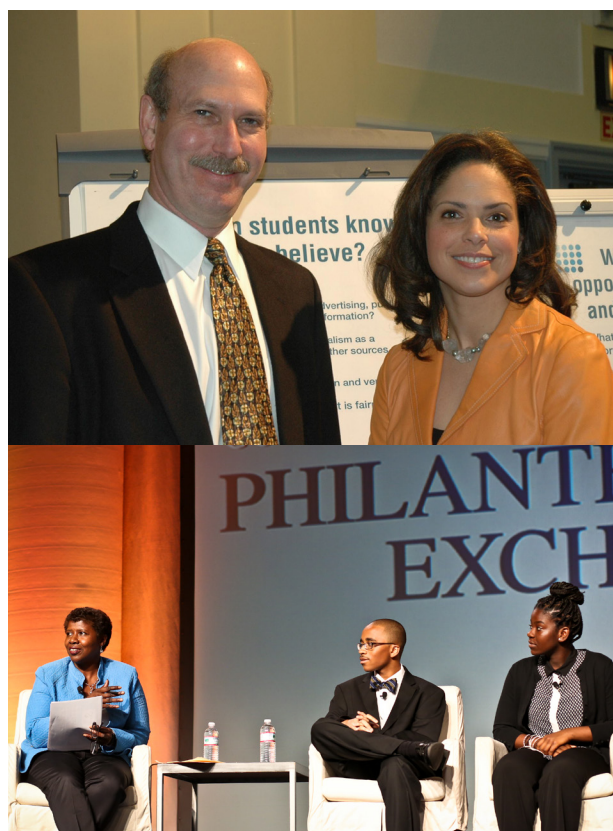
— Zena Zangwill, sixth-grade student at Pyle Middle School, in a thank-you note to Alan Miller

On Feb. 2, 2008, soon after receiving that founding grant, Miller began a leave of absence from the Los Angeles Times to focus on developing his idea (and ended up resigning a month later). He wanted to create a program that would give students in middle school and high school the tools to separate fact from fiction in everything they read, watch or hear, enabling them to appreciate the value of quality news coverage and encouraging them to consume and create credible information across all types of media. Miller's realization from 2006 — that journalists could have an impact in the classroom — was a central part of the mission, and from the start, journalists joined educators in teaching students how to know what to believe.

On Feb. 2, 2009 — exactly one year after Miller's leave of absence began — NLP kicked off its initial pilot with an event featuring Soledad O'Brien, a CNN correspondent and NLP board member, at Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School, a middle school in Brooklyn, New York. That afternoon, David Gonzalez, a reporter and columnist at The New York Times, delivered NLP's first classroom lesson. Just over three weeks later, NLP began its classroom program in five Advanced Placement government classes at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, featuring journalists from Time, ABC News, Politico, The New York Times and USA Today, among others.

The success of those initial pilots led NLP to expand the classroom program to Chicago, Illinois, in the fall of 2009, followed by Washington, D.C., in the spring of 2011. In each city, NLP partnered primarily with underresourced schools where a majority of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs. At the same time, NLP was making its name known to a wider audience through a series of public events in the Washington area, featuring such well-known journalists as Gwen Ifill of *Washington Week* and *PBS NewsHour*, David Brooks and Thomas Friedman of The New York Times, Chuck Todd and Andrea Mitchell of NBC News, Ruth Marcus and E.J. Dionne of The Washington Post, and Al Hunt of Bloomberg News.

In an effort to reach even more students (and addressing teachers' wishes for more educational technology in the classroom), NLP developed a digital unit in 2012. It retained the journalists' voices through narrated video lessons, interactive computer-based training sessions and a live videoconference. That same year NLP began working with Evaluation Services, an outside consultant, to conduct formal assessments of its programs — a collaboration that continues to this day.



Top: Miller and Soledad O'Brien (right) attend the kickoff event for NLP's classroom program at Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School in Brooklyn, New York, in 2009. Bottom: Gwen Ifill (left) moderates a student panel on the importance of news literacy at the Council on Foundations' annual conference in Washington, D.C., in 2014.

By the 2013-14 school year, NLP's classroom, after-school and digital programs had mobilized journalists to work with more than 100 English, government, history and journalism teachers in 82 schools to reach more than 6,800 students in Chicago, New York City and the Washington, D.C., area (including suburbs in Maryland and Virginia). But it had become



apparent that the program needed to move fully online to reach national scale.

That decision led to the development of the Checkology® virtual classroom — initially a series of 10 core lessons that gave students a foundation in news literacy, with prominent journalists from The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, NBC and other well-known outlets as video teachers and guides. Launched in May 2016, the platform was extremely well-received; in just its first two months, educators in 22 states and the District of Columbia signed on. And it has grown exponentially: More than 17,000 educators (and counting) in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, three U.S. territories and more than 100 other countries have registered to use the platform since its release.

Today, NLP's website, [newslit.org](https://newslit.org), offers tools that help adults, as well as teens, understand the importance of news literacy. Started in April 2017, our NewsLitCamp® is a one-day professional development program, hosted by a local news organization, where journalists from that outlet join NLP staff to bring news literacy resources to local teachers. And in August 2018, NLP released a reimagined version of the [Checkology virtual classroom](#), with 13 lessons, greater interactivity, improved resources, and an increased ability for educators to customize lessons based on classroom needs. Of particular interest to international educators is our lesson “Press Freedoms Around the World” — led by Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, a Berlin-based correspondent for NPR — in which students explore the state of international press freedoms through an interactive map that includes videos from journalists reporting on the state of press freedoms in their country.

In just over a decade, NLP grew from an idea in a journalist's mind to a national leader in the field of news literacy. We are delighted to work with you to expand this knowledge throughout the world.



Top: A still from an NLP video depicts one way students today find information — on their smartphones. Middle: Damaso Reyes, NLP's director of partnerships, talks to educators attending a NewsLitCamp in August 2018. Bottom: NPR's Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson is the host of “Press Freedoms Around the World,” a lesson in NLP's Checkology virtual classroom.

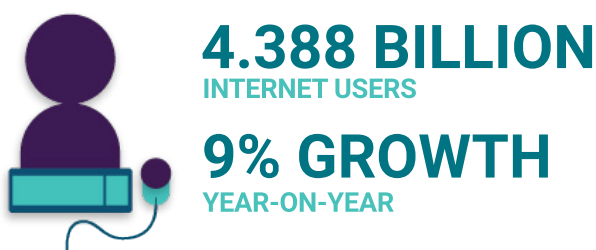
## Chapter Two

# A Brief History of Misinformation

The phrase “fake news” has come into frequent usage only recently, but the concept, a broad one, is old. (How old? Pope Francis [suggested in January 2018](#) that it can be traced to the serpent’s lies to Eve in the Garden of Eden.)

For eons, people around the world have shared all sorts of information — the news that’s important to have, to be sure, but also the latest rumors and the hottest gossip. Community, city, regional and national leaders handed down what they wanted the public to know and believe. Then, as now, there were three basic elements to the transfer of information: the source, the message itself and the recipients.

While these are still the basic elements of information exchange within communities and among societies today, technology and the internet have immeasurably changed the nature of each and created a vastly different ecosystem for news.



Today, everyone with an internet connection — [4.3 billion people](#) as of January 2019, or more than half of the world’s population — can be a publisher, even just by retweeting a Twitter post or sharing a meme. That means there are billions and billions of pieces of information, distributed as images, videos,

GIFs, news articles and more. And technology allows more sophisticated forms of distortions of what is published — and greater speed in spreading lies.

As news consumption has moved online, news organizations long recognized for their credibility and adherence to traditional standards of quality journalism have seen their profits disappear and their staffs decimated. As a result, many communities have lost common sources of information — and a common understanding of facts.

Add social platforms with their algorithms and bots, and the public is now caught in a powerful and dangerous whirlwind of self- and auto-selected news, rumors, gossip, state-sponsored propaganda and falsehoods.

And dangerous it is: While technology has led to leaps in people’s abilities to stay in touch with family and friends, lead more informed lives, create positive change in their communities and more, it has also led to a world in which the internet and social media platforms have allowed people to see only the viewpoints they want to see, with their existing beliefs reinforced by what the internet serves up. Today, technologies are being used as weapons in a fight for power and money, tapping into and exacerbating our best and worst traits.

Of today’s media fragmentation, consisting of filter bubbles and echo chambers, Jonathan Albright of Columbia University’s Tow Center for Digital Journalism in New York City [says](#): “Our technological and communication infrastructure — the ways that we experience reality, the ways we get news — are literally disintegrating around us.”

To understand the battle between “fake news” and journalism in today’s digital world, it helps to know a bit of the history of both.

## Standards of reporting

Today’s high-quality journalism is founded on facts, but that’s not the way it has always been.

“Journalism” and “news” are not interchangeable concepts, and the two have a long, intertwined history. Accurate eyewitness reports of events are only a small part of the information ecosystem, which also includes a mix of entertainment, biased or sensationalized reports, and outright fictions.

“News” goes back to when balladeers sang stories, or people gathered at watering holes to talk. “News,” too, was the piece in a Scottish broadside (single-sheet newspaper) in the mid-1700s about [a mermaid seen near Inverness](#). It also was [The War of the Worlds](#), the 1938 radio drama about a Martian invasion of the U.S. state of New Jersey that many listeners believed was an actual news report.



Nowadays (and perhaps then), the mermaid tale would be considered wholly made up and the Martian invasion satire. Needless to say, neither was based in facts. That’s where “journalism” comes in.

Journalism standards and codes of ethics — generally, the attempt to uncover the facts and report them fully, fairly, accurately and contextually — are relatively new, even in countries with a free press. Journalism’s

purpose, [as the American Press Institute puts it](#), is “to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments.”

The origins of journalism, with its core concept of neutrality, lie in what professors John Maxwell Hamilton and Heidi Tworek, among others, call an Anglo-American model that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries ([PDF download](#)). Numerous factors in the United States and Britain, including the greater profit that owners found in owning nonpartisan news outlets, led to a system of practices and beliefs that credible news organizations aspire to today: impartial, independent news reporting whose methods, such as attribution, are clear enough to the public that people are able to decide how trustworthy the information is.

(Elsewhere at the time — including in France, for example, as Jean K. Chalaby notes in his 1998 book, *The Invention of Journalism* — journalists continued to mix news and opinion and “to write in the tradition of publicists, writing to propagate political doctrines and defend the interests of a particular political group.”)

Fact-based journalism did not grow — and has not grown — equally in countries throughout the world. Hamilton and Tworek also note that such aspirations did not thrive in countries where “the public had low literacy and oligarchs controlled the press.”

That continues to be the case today: [The Committee to Protect Journalists](#), an international nongovernmental organization based in New York City, tracks the countries where reporters are threatened, jailed or killed for trying to report the news. In countries with repressive regimes, citizens officially learn only what the government wishes them to hear — and even then, reporters for state-run operations might live in fear.

Even in countries with a model of objective reporting, much of what outlets publish or broadcast as “news” is actually entertainment. Or it could be sensationalized, highly partisan or made-up stories

“Fake news means what your side says it does.”

— Craig Silverman of BuzzFeed News

that can attract readers or viewers (and, therefore, profits), just as was the case hundreds of years ago — only now the reach and influence are reinforced by the sheer power of the internet.

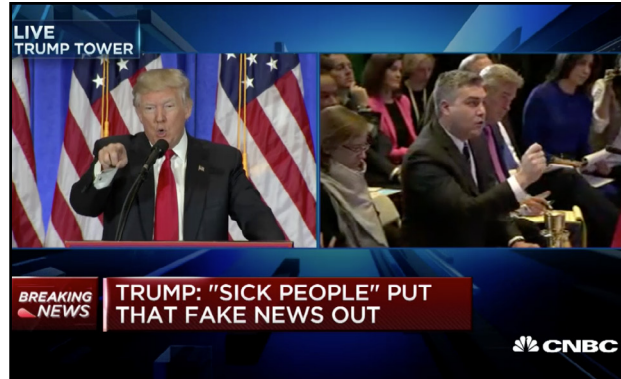
And, as never before, citizens of democratic countries can be targeted by repressive state actors. It's not a new phenomenon; during the Cold War, for example, what the Soviets called “[dezinformatsiya](#)” was used to plant [seeds of discontent](#) among specific communities in the U.S. “to harden people's existing beliefs and fears [and] sow divisions among Americans.” Today, though, these efforts have reached new heights, with almost daily reports of outside forces attempting to influence elections around the world through social media.

In other words, news organizations that are trying to inform citizens in a responsible and fact-based manner are fighting for attention and credibility with actors of varying motives, including state-sponsored trolls trying to sow division, content farms out to make money, and internet trolls intent on harassment and provocation.

## Fake news and ‘fake news’

Those fighting “fake news” say it's important to define it carefully.

In 2014, as a research fellow at Columbia University's Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Craig Silverman began tracking unverified claims and online rumors. As media editor at BuzzFeed News, he applied the phrase “fake news” [only to wholly made-up stories](#) — the same definition that was applied in the late 19th century, when the term ([according to Merriam-Webster](#), the dictionary publisher) was first used in the United States.



U.S. President Donald Trump, CNBC, 2017

But the meaning of those two words changed on Jan. 11, 2017, when Donald Trump, only nine days from being inaugurated as president of the United States, pointed to a journalist from CNN — which had reported the previous day on a document that contained controversial allegations about Trump — and said: “No questions from you — you are fake news!”

“In that moment, fake news was conscripted to fight in the partisan wars, and was co-opted by Trump,” Silverman wrote. “This instantly made it harder to win the actual fight against the manipulation of platforms for profit and propaganda, the real challenges facing democracy in a connected age, and the risks of censorship from platforms and governments alike.”

Silverman [rues his role](#) in making the phrase part of the contemporary lexicon, even while noting that it has long since lost its original meaning — or, to be honest, any real meaning.

“The story of ‘fake news’ symbolizes how our current information environment operates and is manipulated, how reality itself is shaped and bent,” he wrote. “So long as you have enough followers, propagators, airtime, attention — and the ability to coordinate all of them ... you can literally brand real things as fake. Repeat it often enough, and you manufacture reality for a portion of the population. Fake news means what your side says it does.”

Claire Wardle, the executive director of First Draft, and Hossein Derakhshan, a writer and researcher, are the authors of the 2017 report *Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research*



and policy making ([PDF download](#)), prepared for the Council of Europe. They see the phrase “fake news” mostly as a [cudgel](#) used by politicians around the world — including President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, President Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela and President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines — to condemn journalists and censor news.

Wardle discourages use of the phrase, largely because it is unhelpful: “The term ‘fake’ doesn’t begin to describe the complexity of the different types of misinformation (the inadvertent sharing of false information) and disinformation (the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false).”

Motive matters too, they write. Who is the source, and what is the intent: Is it an ad to sell a product, or propaganda to sell a belief?

Messages, motives and technology combined have led to what Wardle and Derakhshan call “information disorder” ([PDF download](#)).

“We are witnessing something new: information pollution at a global scale; a complex web of motivations for creating, disseminating and consuming these ‘polluted’ messages; a myriad of content types and techniques for amplifying content; innumerable platforms hosting and reproducing this content; and breakneck speeds of communication between trusted peers.”



## **Seven Types of Mis- and Disinformation**

### **Satire or parody**

When content is created for humor, with no intention to cause harm — but with the potential to fool.

### **Misleading content**

When information is used in a misleading way to frame an issue or individual (for example, suggesting that someone took a position that the person did in fact take — but leaving out important information that would put the position in a different light).

### **Imposter content**

When genuine sources are impersonated (for example, attributing a fact to a well-known and credible news source that did not actually report the fact).

### **Fabricated content**

When content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.

### **False connection**

When headlines, visuals or captions don’t support the content (for example, headlines that lead a person to click to learn more but where the stories don’t match the headline).

### **False context**

When genuine content is shared with false contextual information (for example, an image of an attack that occurred, but with a caption giving a different time and place).

### **Manipulated content**

When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive (for example, a fabricated video, known as a “deepfake,” that substitutes a person’s face or voice to make it appear that the person is doing something that actually was never done or saying something that actually was never said).

— *From Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making* by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan

## ! Motives and More

**“Misinformation”** is false information shared with no intent to harm, such as when someone shares an untrue rumor as a matter of gossip.

**“Disinformation”** falls under the umbrellas of both false and harmful, and includes hoaxes, misleading context and manipulated or fabricated content.

**“Malinformation”** is harmful, and includes harassment and hate speech.

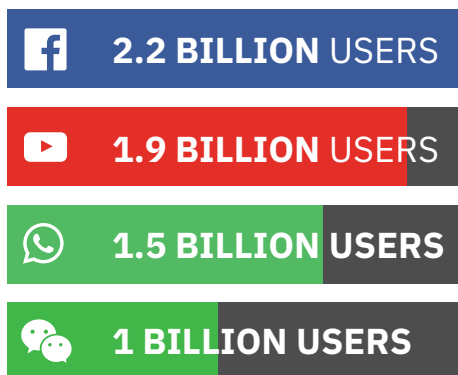
— From [Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making](#) by Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan

## Technology-fueled misinformation

To know where damage is being done, it helps to know where people are exchanging information and news. Today, that’s increasingly online, using social networking sites and apps — where people’s behaviors are shaped by algorithms and their beliefs influenced by bots.

Among the [most popular worldwide](#) are Facebook, which has long topped the list in terms of numbers worldwide, with more than 2 billion active users; YouTube (owned by Google), the largest video networking site; WhatsApp (owned by Facebook), an instant messaging service; Facebook Messenger, an instant message service within Facebook; and Instagram (owned by Facebook), a photo-based sharing site. In China, where the government blocks access to Facebook and Google products, WeChat, a mobile messaging, social media and payment app, has 1 billion users.

Because they are private forums, not public platforms, messaging apps especially are growing in countries with increasingly authoritarian



governments. As the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford noted in its [2018 digital news report](#):

“A safe place for free expression has been one factor driving the rapid growth of messaging apps in markets like Turkey, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. In our data we find a strong correlation between use of networks like WhatsApp and self-expressed concern about the safety of posting political messages. The highest levels of concern (65%) are in Turkey, where a failed coup two years ago led to opponents of President [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan being jailed and the media muzzled. In a country that the U.S. NGO Freedom House recently labelled ‘not free’ for the first time, encrypted messaging apps like WhatsApp have proved a relatively safe way to express political views.”

Both bots and our own behavior create the online world we each inhabit.

Bots — automated accounts that can appear to be the accounts of real people — can send out messages on a massive scale. And human behavior doesn’t help. Simply put, people tend to spread misinformation (which is often more titillating and interesting than the truth) [far more widely and quickly](#) than less sensational news. Also, posts that tap into primal emotions spread farther and faster online because they keep people engaged longer, thus gaining an even larger audience.

The most dangerous situation — one that threatens democracy — is what Facebook calls “false amplification” ([PDF download](#)), which it defines as

“[c]oordinated activity by inauthentic accounts with the intent of manipulating political discussion (e.g., by discouraging specific parties from participating in discussion, or amplifying sensationalistic voices over others).”

In May 2018, nearly a year after Facebook posted those words, the U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence [released](#) 3,500 Russia-linked ads that had been published on Facebook and Instagram accounts before and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election. As special counsel Robert S. Mueller III wrote in [his February 2018 indictment of 13 Russian individuals and three companies](#), those accounts were able to “reach significant numbers of Americans for purposes of interfering with the U.S. political system, including the presidential election of 2016” — a conclusion that had also been reached a year earlier by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence [in a report](#) stating that, based on information obtained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, Russian President Vladimir Putin had ordered the pre-election activity with the goal of disrupting the U.S. political system and electing Donald Trump as president.

At least 700 Facebook pages and accounts (and likely many more) were linked to the Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Russian propaganda organization, feeding lies to very specific target audiences based on interests people had shown in their online activities. Of these and other efforts, wrote Mueller, the IRA “had a strategic goal to sow discord in the U.S. political system.”

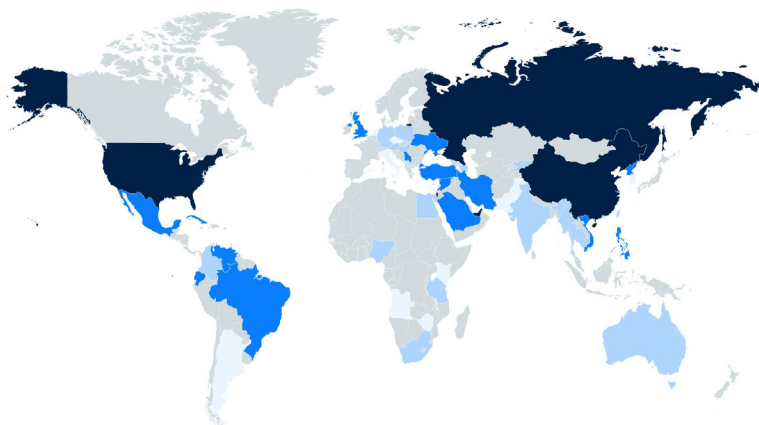
Accusations of Russian interference continued in advance of the U.S. Senate and House elections in November 2018. On Oct. 19, just weeks before Election Day, the U.S. Department of Justice [charged](#) a Russian national with conspiracy to defraud the United States by allegedly managing a project with a budget of \$35 million — paid for by a close ally of Putin — that created thousands of email and social media accounts to conduct “information warfare against the United States.” That same day, Twitter released more than 10 million

tweets — 9 million from the IRA alone, the rest largely linked to accounts in Iran — that had been sent in an effort to influence and disrupt political debate, both in the U.S. and globally.

Indeed, [according to a number of researchers](#) trying to fight disinformation, “[n]ation-states and politically-motivated organizations have long been the initial brokers of misinformation.”

Two University of Oxford researchers who focused narrowly on just that aspect of disinformation found evidence in 48 countries — up from 28 in 2017 — of at least one political party or government agency attempting to manipulate public opinion. In their 2018 study [Challenging Truth and Trust: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation](#), Samantha Bradshaw and Philip N. Howard call these parties or agencies “cyber troops.” Since 2010, political parties and governments have spent more than half a billion dollars on the research and implementation of psychological operations over social media. In most cases, this has involved spreading misinformation during elections, military crises and humanitarian disasters.

“The manipulation of public opinion over social media platforms has emerged as a critical threat to public life,” Bradshaw and Howard wrote, calling the phenomenon “computational propaganda” — which they define as “the use of automation, algorithms and big-data analytics to manipulate public life.”



Map of global cyber-troop capacity from *Challenging Truth and Trust*, with darker countries illustrating a greater capacity (size, resources, funds, coordination). Click on the image for a PDF download of the report.

Yet the attempts to sow discord cannot be gauged just by numbers, [according to](#) the Tow Center's Albright, who characterized the addition of propaganda and lies as drops of misinformation that pollute the entire information ecosystem in unseen but real ways. Here are some examples of information warfare fueled by the internet:



In [Mexico](#), two men were attacked and burned to death by a mob in 2018 after false rumors began circulating on WhatsApp about the presence of child kidnappers in a remote village. [Troll networks on Twitter](#) — some run by bots, some by real persons — have posted death threats aimed at journalists.



In [Myanmar](#), Buddhist extremists spread rumors on Facebook that set off a deadly riot in 2014; three years later, hate speech on Facebook led to ethnic cleansing against the country's Rohingya minority.



In [Ukraine](#), where tensions have been high since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, YouTube videos designed to discredit pro-Ukrainian forces and stir up conflict were released in 2017. They were created by a pro-Russia propaganda outfit in Ukraine that worked with Russia's Internet Research Agency.



In [India](#), rumors that included doctored images and text messaging in 2012 led to violent protests and sent 300,000 citizens fleeing in fear of attacks. In 2018, two dozen people were killed by mobs who had followed [WhatsApp viral rumors](#).



In [Nigeria](#), inflammatory photos and false information on Facebook contributed to more than a dozen killings in 2018 in an area already riven by ethnic violence. Facebook disabled the account of a man in the United Kingdom who was spreading these falsehoods.



In the [Philippines](#), a former senator and critic of President Rodrigo Duterte was imprisoned following a series of viral hoaxes that spread on Facebook, which Duterte encouraged.



In the [United Kingdom](#), thousands of bots linked to Russia's Internet Research Agency sent messages on Twitter with the hashtags #Brexit and #ReasonsToLeaveEU on June 23, 2016 — the day Britain voted whether to continue its membership in the European Union.



In [Brazil](#), WhatsApp was used to spread misinformation and disinformation in advance of the presidential election and runoff in 2018. One Brazilian newspaper revealed a coordinated campaign

that would have sent millions of false and misleading WhatsApp messages to voters a week before the runoff.

For their part, tech companies insist that they are neutral platforms and struggle to maintain a balance between that stance and making the types of editorial choices that news organizations must make in what to allow online. Each platform periodically announces a way in which it is trying to tighten security: For example, in October 2018, a month before the U.S. Senate and House elections, Facebook [invited reporters](#) to see what it called its "election war room"; that same month, Twitter [announced](#) its new attempts to combat disinformation. Two months before, both Twitter and Facebook [said](#) they had removed hundreds of fake pages and accounts that originated in Iran and Russia and were attempting to meddle in politics in the United States and the United Kingdom.

In addition, Facebook has expanded its worldwide fact-checking capabilities by partnering with independent fact-checking groups certified by the



Poynter Institute's [International Fact-Checking Network](#); these efforts, now in more than 20 countries, also include reviews of photos and videos for manipulation.

## Distrust and civic life

A 2018 report from the RAND Corporation — [Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Life](#) — examined the American public's relationship to news, trust and truth. Its broad findings can be applied worldwide.

### The authors, Jennifer Kavanagh and Michael D. Rich, define “truth decay” as:

- Increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data.
- A blurring of the line between opinion and fact.
- The increasing relative volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact.
- Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information.

Among causes of people's tendency to trust less, they say, are the way in which humans process information — for instance, naturally seeking out and seeing only what they already believe (a phenomenon known as confirmation bias) and relying on what they hear from friends — and changes in the information system, including the rise of social media and the wide dissemination of disinformation and misleading or biased information.

## Combating misinformation and disinformation

Given that today's complex information ecosystem still includes the basic elements of sender, message, and receiver, it makes sense that attempts to rein in misinformation address all of these elements. Technology — the basis for the most popular methods of disseminating information today — has a role as well.

A useful breakdown is found in [How to combat fake news and disinformation](#), a 2017 report by the Brookings Institution, a research and public policy center in Washington, D.C. It recommends five routes to fight disinformation and one way not to fight it: through overly restrictive government intervention. (Why? Because governments around the world are increasingly demonizing and jailing journalists, often using charges of “fake news.”)

These routes to fighting mis- and disinformation include:

**Government.** To maintain healthy societies, governments should support independent professional journalism — reports that make sense of complicated developments and clarify rapidly changing events. They should also avoid crackdowns on the media, which limit freedom of expression.

**News organizations.** Credible news outlets can champion society's need for responsible journalism, and promote their own fact-checking initiatives. Transparency efforts that show how good journalism works include explaining the decisions that led to publication of a story, publishing documents that a report relies on, and tapping the wisdom of the crowd to help ferret out additional information. They also can support the work of independent fact-checking organizations in their countries. [The International Fact-Checking Network](#) was established in 2015. Its 2018 Global Fact-Checking Summit in Rome, Italy, included representatives from fact-checking initiatives, academia and technology companies in 56 countries.

**Technology companies.** These businesses, which now power almost every aspect of society worldwide, should invest in fact-checking technology and ways to use human monitors more wisely. They should “stop the monetization of fake news” by weakening the financial incentives that lure trolls to place sensationalized or false stories. (During the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, [teens in Macedonia](#) wrote or shared on Facebook completely untrue stories meant to appeal to U.S. supporters of Donald Trump. Their 140 websites and hyperpartisan Facebook pages earned them “[easy money](#),” in one teen’s words, by drawing an enormous number of clicks and shares.)

**Educational institutions.** Governments should be encouraged to fund news literacy programs, especially in countries where people are going online for the first time. Of particular importance are programs for young people.

**Public awareness.** Finally, members of the public need to take responsibility for their media habits. The strategies taught in educational programs — checking a variety of sources, learning how to judge news sites and verifying images and content before sharing — are ones the general public can, and should, use too.

According to a [2018 survey](#) by the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., about two-thirds of Americans get at least some news from social media, though many of them now expect that what they see there is inaccurate and untrustworthy. The [2018 digital news report](#) by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that, worldwide, as news literacy increases, trust in news from search engines and news from social media becomes less widespread.

In short, as Yale University historian Timothy Snyder has written:

“Believe in truth. To abandon facts is to abandon freedom.”

## Chapter Three

# News Literacy and Civics Education

For decades, civics education in the United States was largely based on rote memorization of facts considered important in U.S. history. Anecdotally, students in middle grades spent more time memorizing the preamble to the Constitution (“We the people of the United States ...”) than learning the relevance of the rights and freedoms set out in that document. Internationally, this was the case as well; as recently as the 1990s, when former dictatorships and Communist countries became democracies, students had to learn a new set of facts: the nuts and bolts of how a democratic form of government works.

Today, civics education is focused on understanding and applying that knowledge so students can become active and engaged participants in the life of their communities and countries. And if civic engagement is about being connected to the life of the community, then students must be informed about — and understand — the things going on around them. This is the role of news literacy education.



The Checkology virtual classroom has been integrated into social studies lessons at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia.

## There are two key areas where news literacy and civics intersect in the classroom:

- Students must build knowledge about journalism, mass media and other information and understand how this information is created and published.
- Students must strengthen their ability to critically analyze their existing media preferences — especially the use of social media as a source for news.

Teachers typically focus on the first point, with an emphasis on legacy local news outlets (such as daily or weekly newspapers) and national news sources (such as weekly or monthly magazines and network news organizations). While students do need to learn how to evaluate news from these sources, the reality is that very few young people — even as they grow older — will use them the way their teachers and parents do. In their 2017 report [\*The Republic is \(Still\) at Risk and Civics is Part of the Solution\*](#), Tufts University researchers described the changes needed in 21st-century civics education. First on the list: “Prepare students for a world of social media instead of printed local newspapers.”

### The Tufts report also lists six proven practices of civic education that need to be part of a quality civics course:

- Courses on civics, government, law and related topics.
- Deliberations of current controversial issues.
- Service learning.
- Student-created and -led organizations.
- Student voice in schools.
- Simulations of adult civic roles.

An essential prerequisite for many of these practices is ensuring that students are news-literate — that they have been empowered to be critical consumers of news and other information. Understanding the needs of the community helps students as they participate in service learning projects. Creating student-led organizations and student voice committees and participating in simulations of adult civic roles also require students to have a basic understanding and knowledge of the world around them.

Of these practices, “deliberations of current controversial issues” stands out as the key component where news literacy education connects directly with the civics curriculum. Focusing on this requires essential skills that students must master and that news literacy education provides — for example, students must be able to differentiate between news and opinion and be able to evaluate the arguments and evidence used to support the latter.

In addition, students must be able to recognize different types of bias, especially their own. News literacy provides the spark that can motivate students to learn more about — and then become more connected to — their communities. Critical (and thoughtful) news consumption is essential to civic engagement.

Today, students can connect with elected and government officials in ways not available a generation ago. With the critical evaluation skills that news literacy provides, students are empowered to connect and interact with their elected officials, especially on social media.

An especially important area of focus for civics education is to encourage students to become regular consumers of local news. People with strong local news habits have a closer attachment to their local communities, are more likely to vote in local elections and participate in local group and political activity, and are more likely to engage in conversations about current events that affect them and their communities.

There are several other areas where civics education and news literacy skills connect. During election years or in times where political issues are widely discussed, students can use news literacy techniques to evaluate information and distinguish among news, opinion and propaganda. They can also use these skills to identify politically motivated misinformation — a constant challenge on social media. As they follow political campaigns, students can apply fact-checking skills — both to the claims



made by candidates and to the endorsements of those candidates by individuals and organizations.

The goal of civics education in the 21st century is to prepare students to be active, informed and engaged participants in the civic life of their communities. It's not enough for students to memorize details or recite facts about their country's founding documents and history; students must be able to apply what they have learned. They must be able to evaluate, understand and effectively communicate political information, especially as it relates to their local communities. It is here where news literacy lays the foundation and develops the skills for students to become critical consumers of news and other information – which then empowers them to be engaged and informed citizens.



Journalism teacher Noreen Connolly (left) guides a student at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, New Jersey, through a Checkology lesson in 2017.

## Chapter Four

# Putting It Together: Lessons Learned and Best Practices

## Introduction

As we noted earlier, our hope is that our experiences will be useful to you as you introduce or expand news literacy programs in your community and country. Here are some of the lessons we have learned over the last decade.

From the beginning, we established key partnerships in our efforts to spread the critical-thinking skills of news literacy, and it may be helpful for you to do so as well. These partners include:



### Educators

**Educators** are our most important partners. We work closely with them as they use our programs to teach news literacy practices to **students**. Ties with **news organizations** — top editors, producers, publishers and owners — help connect us with **individual journalists**, who have written about the News Literacy Project, appeared at our events and participated in our curriculum, both in person and on video. You'll find more information about these partners in this chapter.

*If you have not already done so, we recommend establishing relationships with all of these key players as you begin to develop your program.*



### News Organizations

As we expanded, we also needed to raise our profile — both among those partners and with the general public. Being able to communicate effectively, both about our organization and about the importance of news literacy, was key, and we have some suggestions that could help you.



### Individual Journalists



### Students

**Read on** for an overview of how we developed our news literacy resources. You can use this as a road map as you start your own programs and work toward preparing a full curriculum.

## Overview

We began on a small scale, creating a series of engaging lessons to give students in grades 6-12 a foundation in news literacy concepts and skills and introducing these lessons in just a few schools (two schools and an after-school program in our initial pilot). This allowed us to test and evaluate our curriculum (which grew to include hands-on e-learning resources and, as our program developed, digital media) and student project ideas as we created them, improved them and established their viability and effectiveness.

We also tapped into the passion journalists feel for their work by bringing both active and retired journalists into schools to encourage students to seek verified information on any medium or platform. Working in concert with teachers and our staff, these volunteer journalists (we called them “journalist fellows”) extended what students were learning in our core curriculum by tying in their own compelling stories. Individually or in teams, journalists visited classrooms or connected with students in videoconferences. They helped to teach students how journalism works, how journalists verify information, why news matters to young people and what a free press and the First Amendment (the constitutional guarantee of, among other things, free speech and a free press) mean in U.S. democracy.

### In classes during school hours

We introduced our classroom program in February 2009, one year after NLP was founded. It became our laboratory and our showcase as we developed, tested and refined our curriculum and model.

Even though our curriculum is now completely online, we still continue, with ongoing refinements, to use the formula from our in-person classroom program: a modular approach that provides smaller curriculum elements that teachers can use as stand-alone lessons, as thematic modules or in their entirety as a comprehensive news literacy unit, depending on what makes sense for them and their students. In fact, the four foundational lessons in our [Checkology virtual classroom](#) (“InfoZones,” “Democracy’s Watchdog,”

“Misinformation” and “Practicing Quality Journalism”) are updated or adapted versions of lessons from our classroom program (“The Information Neighborhood,” “Democracy’s Watchdog,” “The Power of Deception” and the “Be a Reporter Game”).

One key to getting into schools was the high degree of flexibility that we offered teachers. We created drop-in units that could fit into social studies, history, government, English, humanities or journalism classes. They were not designed as a full course or elective that would displace educators’ existing lesson plans.

These drop-in units also helped in terms of bureaucracy; teachers did not need to get approval from a school district or school board when they

The image shows two screenshots from the Checkology virtual classroom. The top screenshot is a handout titled "HANDOUT 3.1: THE INFO ZONES" with a subtitle "LESSON #3 HANDOUT". It features a diagram of four hexagons labeled "NEWS", "OPINION", "ADVERTISEMENT", and "ENTERTAINMENT" under the heading "PRIMARY INFO ZONES". Below the diagram, there are detailed definitions and bullet points for each zone. The bottom screenshot shows the "InfoZones" lesson interface, which includes a large number "1" and a "Start" button.

**HANDOUT 3.1: THE INFO ZONES**

**LESSON #3 HANDOUT**

**PRIMARY INFO ZONES**

**NEWS**

**NEWS (ALSO REFERRED TO AS "STRAIGHT" OR "HARD" NEWS, NEWS ARTICLE OR NEWS REPORT)**  
News is a report on an event, individual, issue or some other subject that is produced primarily to inform its audience.

- News should be about topics that are relevant, interesting, important and unique.
- News is produced according to ideals, or standards, that ensure the greatest degree of credibility possible.
- An most important standard is an effort to minimize bias in all forms.
- Quality news reports provide an accurate, balanced, fair and thorough account of the subject.
- The facts and content of news reports may cause people to form strong opinions, but the reports should not be produced with the purpose of persuading.
- Beware of anonymous news reports! You should always be able to tell who created the news you consume.
- News reports should give people the information they need to make up their own minds about the subject.

**OPINION (ALSO REFERRED TO AS EDITORIALS, COLUMNS AND COMMENTARY)**  
Opinion is any information that is created to **persuade** people in some way, usually by making claims about a political or social issue and presenting facts and other evidence to support those claims.

**InfoZones**

210pts

**Start**

Sorting information then and now: A handout from our classroom program (top) and the start of our “InfoZones” lesson in the Checkology virtual classroom (bottom).



integrated news literacy into existing coursework or when the class was discussing compatible topics. As an example, individual educators in the U.S. could fit in our lessons about free expression and the watchdog role of a free press when their classes were studying the Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution) or examining the press and politics.

We told our partner teachers that our goal was to help them do what they were already doing — including teaching critical thinking — while at the same time bringing NLP's focus and the journalists' expertise and experience into their classrooms. We also underscored where our lessons could help them meet required teaching standards.

Right from the start, we refined our lessons, based on what students and teachers told us and what our assessments showed in terms of student learning outcomes. Along the way, we learned that opportunities to integrate news literacy into learning, either during school hours or in after-school

programs, are plentiful, but teachers must be trained to recognize these opportunities and supported with resources to capitalize on them.

### After-school programs

We partnered with several established after-school programs in the cities where we had classroom programs (New York City, the Washington, D.C., area and Chicago). For all of them, it was vital that the program find a way to engage the same group of students on an ongoing basis and hold to a predictable schedule for the news literacy classes (once a week on the same day, for example).

Another possibility is offering news literacy classes as a kind of “camp” that students attend during school breaks or holidays. If these sessions can also offer students a lunchtime meal or a snack, this may entice parents to enroll their children, who might otherwise have unstructured time during school breaks.



Politico's Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist, Matt Wuerker, gives impromptu drawing lessons to students from Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School in Washington, D.C., during their visit to the publication's office in 2014.



Next, we'll describe more fully the partners and ideas that might be helpful to your own news literacy efforts, especially those that include journalists in the classroom. You can also plan to build into your coursework any or all of our four foundational lessons in our [Checkology virtual classroom](#) ("InfoZones," "Democracy's Watchdog," "Misinformation" and "Practicing Quality Journalism"), which are available at no cost.

## Key Partnerships

### Educators

Teachers are your partners from Day One. Though you can offer professional development opportunities (more on that below), start with the understanding that they are already teaching their students to think critically about news and other information. Let them know that you want to help them do what they are already doing by providing additional expertise, experience and focus. Ask what they need — and what they don't have. Tell them that you welcome their feedback to let you know what is working and what is not.

! Keep in mind that they are probably already teaching some form of news literacy, information literacy or media literacy in their classrooms. Do not believe — or act as if you think — that news literacy is the only way to teach critical thinking. Reverse the idea of who is helping whom: You will want teachers to give you guidance on how you can better meet their needs.

! If possible, create a closed group on Facebook, WhatsApp or another social platform to connect teachers with each other and with you as part of an online community. Seek their input through surveys, and share the results of student surveys with them. Try to make someone available to answer their questions and assist them when necessary.

! Educators are experts in teaching complex concepts to their students, and in adapting and delivering whatever resources they have on hand. Giving them a space to collaborate and access the necessary support structures will pay big dividends.

! Our classroom and after-school programs included resource guides for teachers, filled with background material on news literacy, our initial classroom lesson plans, guidance for how news literacy can help meet required teaching standards, and ideas for enriching what students were learning with discussions and projects. Today, the teacher handbook and lesson guides for our Checkology virtual classroom [are online.](#))

When teachers first approach "news literacy," many may have limited experience with, or understanding of, what is included in this content area. It's not enough to simply provide lesson plans or curriculum elements; educators need to understand the ideas and core concepts behind them. We found that creating professional development sessions — offered online or in person — enabled educators to become familiar with both the theory of news literacy and the fundamentals of teaching it.

For these sessions, it is helpful, but not essential, that you gather together educators who have something in common — perhaps they all teach the same age group or subject matter or are in the same

geographic area. It is important to give them time, either during the session or afterward, to talk with one another — to brainstorm ideas for lessons and activities that teach core news literacy concepts, and devise and share strategies for integrating news literacy into their classrooms.

We have delivered [professional development training](#) to middle school and high school educators across a variety of subject areas and in a variety of settings, including at educator conferences and through online videoconferences. Our most recent professional development product is [NewsLitCamp®](#) — an all-day training held in a local newsroom that connects teachers and journalists in conversational workshops. (As an example, [here is the agenda](#) of

our first such event, held at the Chicago Sun-Times newspaper. Our subsequent NewsLitCamps have used a similar format.)

We found that the following approaches to news literacy professional development greatly enhanced our outcomes with educators:

**Teacher-centered.** Too often, professional development is not created to serve teachers' needs. We strive to expose teachers to new ideas in our sessions, but we always look for ways to focus on activities and concepts that they actually want and need. Asking for feedback from participants is important — perhaps a simple questionnaire or an open chat at the end. Equally important is just observing: Track common questions. Notice which topics and slides or activities generate the most excitement or interest from audiences. Pay attention to what sorts of resources get teachers engaged on social media. Simply ask at the beginning of a session: What do you hope to get out of this workshop/day?

**Example-driven.** Of particular use to educators are examples of news and other information that they can use to teach specific concepts or skills. Teachers regularly ask us for copies of slides that contain examples of viral rumors, or depictions of the ways misinformation is created and is spread, or insightful (and often shocking) illustrations of new artificial intelligence and computer-generated-image technologies.

They also highly value off-the-shelf tools and other resources for verifying information and teaching news literacy. While formal training sessions do help teachers develop skills that will enable them to create their own new materials, educators are also consistently hungry for accessible, high-quality resources that will work in the classroom. The teachers we work with ask for — and respond to — graphic organizers, concrete ideas for activities and student projects, lesson plans, creative approaches to student engagement, and access to collections of digital tools and third-party resources that they can incorporate into their teaching.



Educators and journalists come together to learn from each other at the Houston Chronicle NewsLitCamp in November 2018.

We have found that members of the general public — of all ages — are interested in using our tools and resources. When we overhauled our [website](#) in the spring of 2018, we created [shareable graphics](#), [quizzes](#) and [blog posts](#) that appeal to a broad audience for use in and out of the classroom. We feature these both on our site and in social media posts that send visitors to our site.

**Self-starting.** Ultimately, we strive to help teachers notice the news literacy “teachable moments” that occur dozens of times a day, in the memes and headlines and rumors all around them online. A successful professional development event will give teachers not just resources and ideas that they can begin using right away, but also an increased ability to create their own resources — to structure their own student discussions, invent their own concise warm-up activities (sometimes called “bell-ringers” by educators) to jump-start learning, and design their own lesson plans and projects. This is what teachers naturally do when they are given the training and resources they need.

## News organizations

News organizations and educators have a similar reason for being: creating an informed citizenry that knows the difference between news and propaganda (not to mention rumors and outright falsehoods) and supports an unfettered press.

In approaching news outlets to be [our partners](#), we asked for three things: an endorsement of our mission by a senior editor, producer or executive; an agreement to make their journalists aware of the opportunity to volunteer with us; and the prospect of working with us in a variety of ways, such as hosting a “VIP” breakfast or lunch for supporters and potential supporters or an event honoring a journalist at that outlet who has been particularly active with us.

We have generally not asked these partners for financial support — in part to avoid this being an impediment to their participation (given the difficult financial state of many U.S. news organizations these days) and in part to avoid the appearance that we included an outlet as a partner because



At an NLP-sponsored public event in November 2013, (from left) Thomas Friedman of The New York Times, Andrea Mitchell of NBC and Gwen Ifill of PBS discuss press coverage of U.S. foreign policy before an audience of more than 1,100 in Washington, D.C.

we received a contribution from it. A few have subsequently provided financial support or have foundations or other philanthropic arms associated with them that have become donors.

## Individual journalists

Tap into your community’s local journalists, and request that they visit classrooms or facilitate a field trip to tour their newsroom. Journalists have a unique ability to bring news literacy concepts to a life in an engaging way. If journalists visit a classroom, it is important to prepare them by tying their visit to a core news literacy concept — such as strategies for sorting news from opinion and advertising, or fact-checking, or the importance of a free press.

For our classroom and after-school programs, we recruited active and retired journalists — reporters, editors and producers who had worked at well-known news outlets — to supplement our lessons by going into classrooms, either in person or online (via Skype, for example), to help students learn to think like journalists.

We arranged orientation and training sessions with journalists at our participating news organizations to encourage them to volunteer and let them know what would be expected. We emphasized that they should not lecture; instead, they should

engage in an exchange of ideas with students. Our staff (which includes former teachers and former journalists) worked with our volunteer journalists to develop “lesson plans” that focused on a specific learning objective and contained several engaging approaches within a single class period.

We invited prominent journalists, such as editors of major publications or leading television newscasters, to serve as the featured guests at VIP breakfasts and panels at universities that advanced NLP’s mission, raised our profile and cultivated financial support. They have included Marty Baron and Dean Baquet, the executive editors of *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, respectively; Paul Gigot, the editorial page editor of *The Wall Street Journal*; Chuck Todd and Andrea Mitchell of NBC News; Martha Raddatz of ABC News; Chris Wallace of Fox News; and Thomas Friedman, Gail Collins and David Brooks, columnists at *The New York Times*.

We also sought ways to reward the journalists’ contributions by including them in events, such as those we held to launch our programs in a new city, and citing them in publications. In 2016 we created a “journalist volunteer of the year” award to honor the memory of one of our founding board members, John Carroll, one of the most renowned and influential editors in U.S. journalism, who had died the previous year.

## Students

Students are not just consumers of news and other information; they are also creators. By posting or commenting on social media, they are already participating in local, national and even global conversations. They are today’s editors and writers (as well as tomorrow’s voters), and they have enormous responsibility in helping keep our information ecosystem healthy. Your aim is to help them understand the power that they and others online have, guide their evaluation skills for news and other information, and shape their online publishing practices to be responsible and empowering.

## Curriculum

We designed our resources knowing that it is important to help students draw connections between the abstract concepts in news literacy education and the information ecosystem in which they live.

Working with a specialist in creating curricula for secondary school social studies (history, civics, government, economics, sociology, etc.) classes, we developed our lessons based on four broad areas. We also conducted assessments (see page 31) to test how well we were doing.

## Foundational pillars

We started with four broad themes (our “enduring understandings”) that would guide everything we created. We wanted a curriculum that would teach:

- Why news matters.
- The role of the First Amendment and a free press in a democracy.
- How to know what to believe.
- The challenges and opportunities created by the internet and digital media.

But these were too broad, we found. News literacy involves so many concepts and skills that it can be easy for educators to get tangled up in various subsets of different subjects.

Focusing more narrowly on a set of essential core skills and concepts helped us allocate resources and create changes that can be measured. Our curriculum shifted to address:



The question we keep in mind has remained the same as we consider changes in our coursework: What do we want students to be able to *do* as a result of our resources?



## Creating the curriculum

The most effective curriculum is engaging and hands-on; it includes multimedia elements and is filled with authentic, real-world examples of news and other information. We meet students where they live, which today is online. We seek engagement in everything we do and avoid lecturing. We encourage discussion between students and teachers, between journalists and students and among students themselves. In our classroom programs, we developed a variety of resources, including graphic organizers, “evergreen” activities, challenges and contests, as well as [ideas for project-based learning](#). (See the [Resources](#) section for some examples.)

**the news literacy project**

# NEWS-LITERATE CURRENT EVENTS

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**QUICK CHECK:**  
Glance through this piece of information to get a sense of its purpose, methods and tone.

**REFLECT:**  
What thoughts & questions do you have about the example at this point?

**DETERMINE THE ESSENTIALS:**  
Date published/broadcast: \_\_\_\_\_

Straight news is information that is intended to inform people in a way that is accurate, complete, fair and neutral.

Does this appear to be an example of “straight news”?

“News-Literate Current Events” resource

**the news literacy project**  
how to know what to believe

# STORY EXPLORERS

**SUMMARY:**  
As a class, students select an event or issue in the news that interests them, then split into research teams to collect and analyze coverage of the subject from different news media. Each group is responsible for gathering and analyzing the quality of the reports from their assigned media outlet(s). They use a K-H-W-L chart to guide their inquiry, research and reflection.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:**  
Students will **develop** and refine their own personal news judgment, **collect** and **evaluate** examples of news and other information about a

“Story Explorers” activity sheet

**the news literacy project**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# VIROLOGY REPORT

Online Rumor Breakdown

**1 THE BASICS**

Date of example: \_\_\_\_\_  
Website/App where found: \_\_\_\_\_  
What is the claim of the rumor you found?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

“Virology Report: Online Rumor Breakdown” activity sheet



## Standards of quality journalism: The lesson on which all are built

Our initial classroom program included five core lessons that were aligned to our four “enduring understandings” and a summative exercise that we called the CHECK process. We now offer a growing collection of online lessons — along with quizzes, challenges and other interactive resources — through our [Checkology virtual classroom](#).

But the one constant on which all lessons are based — and indeed, the reason our organization was founded — is that there are basic, specific practices that make some pieces of information more credible than others. Responsible individuals seeking information adhere to ethics and standards, such as verification and impartiality, whether they are digging up facts on their own or reporting while working for a news organization.

These are the standards of quality journalism, and we consider them the yardstick that we use to measure all news and other information for credibility.

Journalism, by its very nature, is imperfect; that is why it’s called “the first rough draft of history.” Journalists make mistakes for many reasons: the immediacy of deadlines, competitive pressures, misleading (or even false) information from sources, and sloppiness or human error. But journalists at quality news organizations are required to meet standards, the first of which is accuracy. If they fail to do so, there are typically consequences, including — in the most egregious cases, such as the fabrication of sources — dismissal; in most cases, their journalism career will come to an abrupt end. Quality news outlets will correct factual errors.

We encourage students to form critical habits of mind as they consume news and other information.

While learning to ask these critical questions about pieces of questionable information is a helpful exercise, students also should be encouraged to develop more functional and efficient evaluation habits. In short, we want students to think like fact-checkers. This means leaving the example itself



## Critical Questions for Students to Ask

Who created this? How can I tell?

What sources are cited? What is the nature of those sources? Is there documentation?

Is the information presented in a dispassionate manner, or does it appeal to my emotions?

Does it use loaded or inflammatory language or images?

Are different points of view represented?

Is it intended to let me make up my own mind, or does it seek to persuade, inflame or incite?

Is the subject of the article/video/blog post given a chance to respond?

What personal biases do I bring to what I’m reading, watching and hearing?

behind and reading laterally (from a wide variety of sources), searching for more information about the central claims or about the source where those claims originally appeared. This approach can help students debunk misinformation quickly in their daily lives.

All of these activities involve teaching students about the standards of quality journalism — about the importance of verifying facts, of being fair and transparent, of gathering information from high-quality sources and of protecting the public's interest by pursuing the truth above all else.

Once students are familiar with these standards, they are better able to enter critical conversations about news coverage. Indeed, news-literate consumers can make journalism better; we encourage students to hold journalists and other creators of information accountable and to seek corrections if they find errors. "Citizen Watchdogs," a lesson available with Premium access to our Checkology virtual

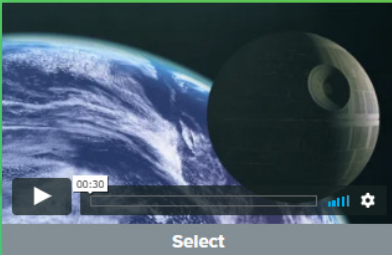
classroom, focuses on an individual's opportunity and responsibility to make a difference in today's information ecosystem.

### Assessment: The course as a whole

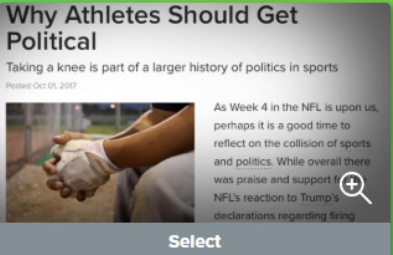
Assessment has always been a part of our work. The measurements are based overall on this question: What can we show that students know and are able to do as a result of experiencing our news literacy lessons?

We have built in a range of assessment types throughout the lessons, including traditional multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions and reflections.

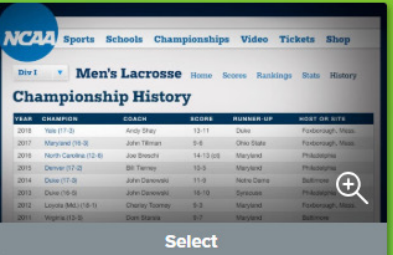
**Select the information whose primary purpose is to sell.**



Select




Select



Select

In this visual multiple-choice assessment from Checkology's "InfoZones" lesson, students click on each example to evaluate it and select the correct option.



**Susie Gomez** @GomezOrGoHome

This is pretty simple actually because there are only two available ways to go here: 1) ACR reinstates all of the test results for kids who did nothing wrong, otherwise 2) ACR pays every kid who took it for their time. Pick one ACR. I'll wait.

**Identify the logical fallacy present in this post.**

- Ad Hominem
- False Equivalence
- Slippery Slope
- False Dilemma
- Straw Man

In this visual multiple-choice assessment from Checkology's "Arguments & Evidence" lesson, students click on an answer and find out immediately whether they are correct.

Our more innovative assessments include asking students to rank examples based on criteria we specified, sort examples of media using criteria we specified, and categorize examples according to definitions we provide.

In our classroom and after-school programs, we developed pre-unit and post-unit evaluation surveys for students that measured changes in their knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Once we moved to an online program, our evaluation surveys measured students' knowledge, attitudes and behavior **before** and **after** they used the virtual classroom (PDF downloads). For teachers, we developed feedback surveys, and we also **requested qualitative responses**.

We shared the results with our staff to make improvements in our curriculum, in our staff support of teachers and, when necessary, in the surveys themselves. We also shared the results with funders, prospective funders and others.

As soon as we could afford to do so, we retained an independent evaluation specialist to analyze all our data and write annual reports on the results, giving the process greater independence and credibility. (The executive summary of the report for the 2017-18 school year is linked [here](#) as a PDF download.)

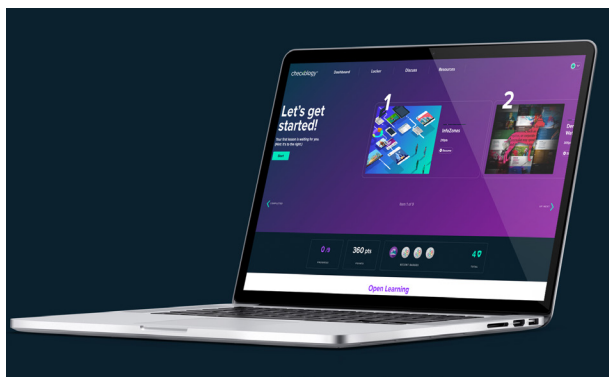
**Informal feedback.** We have always told educators that we want them to be our partners — and we mean it. They have been our best friends, and our best constructive critics, when it comes to improving our programs. We seek constant feedback and regularly incorporate educators' suggestions, such as those emailed by teachers who need support in a specific area or posted in our Facebook group for Checkology educators. Listening carefully to teachers and making modifications and additions based on their feedback has been enormously beneficial.

The screenshot shows the Signal News website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, World, U.S., Political, Business, Tech, Opinion, Arts, and Sports. The main headline is "Tanker Truck Crash Causes Chemical Spill in Residential Area". Below the headline is a sub-headline: "A tanker truck was struck by a car and overturned at First Avenue and Main Street this afternoon, spilling a chemical compound used in industrial products." The article body is partially obscured by a large blue rectangle. Below the article, there is a section titled "STEP 3 Select Your Image" with four image options, each with a description and a "Select" button.

**STEP 3 Select Your Image**

- Image 1:** A red car with a bumper sticker that says "Don't like my driving? AND KANSAS". Description: "This image was pulled from social media. Unlike other photos of the back of the car, this is the only one that includes a bumper sticker." Button: Select
- Image 2:** A red car at the scene of the accident. Description: "This image was taken at the scene of the accident by a freelance photographer who has worked with Signal News for years." Button: Select
- Image 3:** A yellow teddy bear on a green slime. Description: "This image was posted by a freelance photographer. He said he had seen a toy in the slime across the street and adjusted the toy's placement to get a better shot." Button: Select
- Image 4:** A group of people at the scene of the accident. Description: "This image was taken at the scene of the accident by a freelance photographer who has worked with Signal News for years." Button: Select

In the Checkology lesson "Practicing Quality Journalism," students act as a reporter covering a breaking news event. In building their report, students select the image that best illustrates the story while adhering to the standards of quality journalism.



The Checkology virtual classroom offers a series of engaging interactive lessons.

### Checkology virtual classroom

Our classroom and after-school programs, we found, were both resource-intensive and labor-intensive, requiring time and staff as we expanded from New York City and the Washington, D.C., area to Chicago and, later, to pilots in Houston, Texas. We determined that to reach national scale, we needed to adapt our program for the digital age and create a digital curriculum.

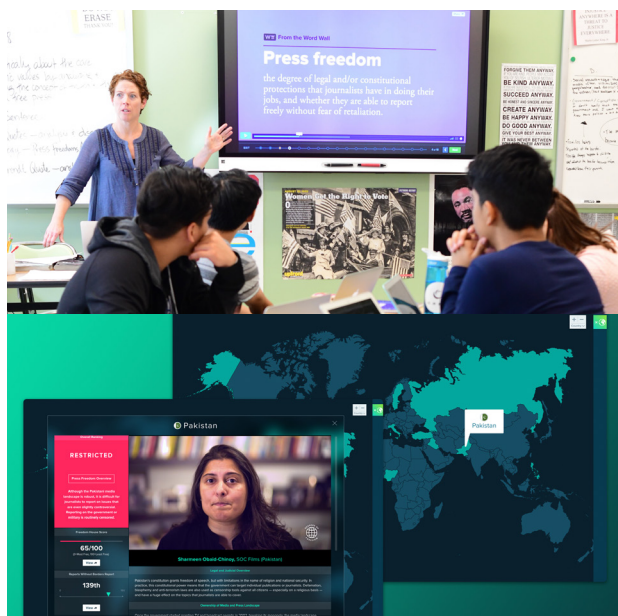
The pilot of the [Checkology virtual classroom](#) was launched in May 2016, in the closing weeks of the 2015-16 school year. In August 2018, we released a reimagined version of the platform, with new and upgraded lessons, superior video quality and the ability for teachers to build a range of Checkology experiences for students at different grade levels. We stuck close to our roots by continuing to involve journalists in our lessons, along with experts on the First Amendment and digital media. They serve as lesson hosts, helping to teach basic concepts and engaging students to learn by presenting them with interactive assessments.

We have put considerable resources into developing story-driven interactive lessons that enable students to take on the role of an editor and decide what goes on their news site's homepage ("Be the Editor"); judge and decide how they would rule on landmark court cases involving the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press ("The First Amendment"); act as a rookie reporter covering a breaking news story ("Practicing Quality Journalism"); and engage

with an interactive map to explore the level and nature of press freedom in countries around the world ("Press Freedoms Around the World").

The platform incorporates many of the best practices of e-learning. It features authentic, real-world learning that is flexible (it can be delivered one-to-many, one-to-few, one-to-one or flipped, with students doing the lessons outside of class and discussing them in class) and are built to encourage — but not rely upon — blending with classroom instruction.

Basic access, available at no charge, gives an educator one license to teach four foundational lessons — "[InfoZones](#)," "[Democracy's Watchdog](#)," "[Misinformation](#)" and "[Practicing Quality Journalism](#)" — in a one-to-many format, using a projector or an interactive whiteboard. Premium access to the platform, available for a modest fee per student, offers nine more lessons, individual student logins and a number of advanced features, such as self-pacing, remediation (which allows students to retry specific assessments), and digital points and badges that offer rewards and incentives to students.



Patricia Hunt, a social studies teacher at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia, incorporates Checkology into her government class.



## Communications

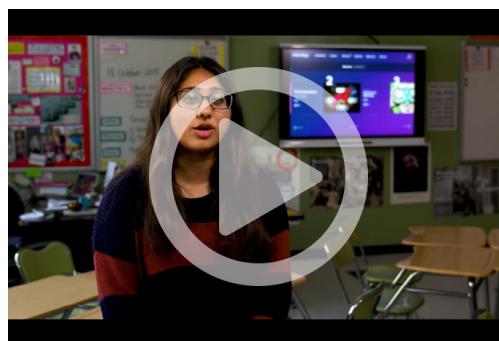
Spreading the word about your work is a huge part of spreading the healthy habits of news literacy. We began by word of mouth, getting into a small number of diverse and dynamic schools through introductions to principals or teachers. Subsequently, school and school district administrators and journalists helped us begin to expand our reach as our reputation in our initial cities grew and we developed more assessment data and anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the impact of our work. Here are key lessons we learned:

**Frame the mission.** Frame your mission as broadly as possible. We say that we are focused on helping to educate the next generation and sustain quality journalism by creating an appreciation and demand for it — but the overriding goal is to create informed and engaged participants in a democracy (or it could be “participants in our country’s civic life”). Though our name is “The News Literacy Project,” we are quick to add that we seek to teach students how to evaluate the credibility of news *and other information*. The field of media literacy may be more familiar to many people, so aligning news literacy within this field can be effective — however, it is important to distinguish the narrower focus on identifying the credibility of information from the broader focus of media literacy, which includes evaluating popular culture, such as films and television, for its depiction of women and ethnic groups.

**Set aspirational goals.** Examine your own community of learners and base your goals on that. We say that we would like to see news literacy embedded in the American education experience. In our four-year strategic framework, we aspire to build a network of 20,000 educators in the U.S. who are using our resources to teach news literacy to 3 million middle school and high school students a year (about 10% of the total number of students in those grades in the U.S.). We also want to turn these educators into a community of practice that, by 2022, is advocating for systemic change in the way news literacy is regarded and taught in schools, including

the adoption of state teaching standards that include the critical-thinking skills reflected in news literacy.

**Share your successes.** Students and teachers will be your best advocates. Identify those who are benefiting from your programs and are willing to share their impact. Over the years, students and teachers have vouched for the quality of our work through quotes and appearances in promotional videos and other materials, participation in public events and interviews with journalists.



Spreading the word about news literacy: Three high school students describe how news literacy lessons changed the way they view the world (top); a look at Checkology in use at a Virginia high school (center); NLP’s “Easiest Quiz of All Time” encourages people to always “double-check your facts” (bottom).



## Best Practices

### News literacy lessons

Make educators your partners from Day One. Stay connected and engaged with them. Create support materials (lesson documentation, extension strategies and ideas) for teachers that explain the concept of news literacy and the background of the lessons you develop.

Approach students as creators as well as consumers of news and information.

Engage news organizations as early programmatic partners and seek access to their journalists.

Invite journalists to play a central role. Train them, coordinate with them and recognize their contributions. Use them to teach basic concepts, whether in person or virtually, and then engage students to learn by doing.

Establish **clear foundational pillars** upon which to build your curriculum and programs.

Start small with pilot programs in one or two schools with one or two journalists to test, evaluate, improve and be able to show the effectiveness of your concept.

Create engaging, hands-on curriculum materials that incorporate real-world examples of news and information.

Create flexible, drop-in news literacy units or modules that are easy for teachers to adopt – and adapt – within their existing curricular requirements.

Teach students the value of knowing the standards of quality journalism, and how they can be used as a “credibility yardstick.”

Build in a range of assessment questions and challenges throughout your lessons and units.

Keep e-learning experiences concise and interactive; create as many opportunities as possible for engagement and hands-on learning. Include examples that students will recognize and understand.

Create and administer quantitative and qualitative assessment tools for everything you do. Use these data to evaluate and improve your programs internally and to demonstrate their effectiveness externally.

Seek and respond to educators’ feedback.

## Communications

Frame your mission as seeking to improve, or strengthen, the health of your country's or community's civic life or civil society.

Situate news literacy within the broader field of media literacy (while also being careful to make distinctions).

Set ambitious but achievable goals.

Find educators and students to vouch for the impact and value of your programs.

Identify educators and students with compelling stories and then follow them to track longitudinal impact.

Share anecdotes from the classroom and beyond on a variety of communications channels (website, social media accounts) to demonstrate the engagement of both students and educators with your program.

Find compelling visual means, such as infographics, to share program data and resources to teach or reinforce key concepts, skills and tools on a variety of communications channels (website, social media accounts) to demonstrate impact.

## Chapter Five

# Resources

Jump to: [North America](#) • [South America](#) • [Europe](#) • [Asia](#) • [Australia](#) • [Related Resources](#)

## News literacy resources: United States

[The News Literacy Project](#) offers resources, tools and news literacy news for educators, students and the general public.

[The Checkology® virtual classroom](#) is NLP's online educational program, used by students in grades 5-12 (ages 10-18). It features 13 engaging interactive lessons, plus challenges, quizzes and other resources, on a variety of news literacy topics.

[The Sift](#) is NLP's weekly newsletter for educators and others interested in news literacy. Published weekly during the U.S. school year (September-June), The Sift puts the latest viral rumors, hoaxes and other similar items into context and provides discussion points and classroom prompts.

[Civics Connection](#) is a blog by NLP's director of education, John Silva, on ideas, strategies and resources for integrating news literacy skills into a civics-aligned curriculum to encourage greater civic engagement among students.

[Facing Ferguson: News Literacy in a Digital Age](#) is an 11-lesson unit created by the News Literacy Project and [Facing History and Ourselves](#), a nonprofit educational and professional development organization that integrates the study of history, literature and human behavior with ethical decision-making and innovative teaching strategies. It examines the role of journalists in a democratic society through the events surrounding the fatal shooting of an unarmed African-American teenager, Michael Brown, by police in Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014.

[The American Press Institute](#) is a research and education center in Arlington, Virginia, that works with news organizations to develop insights, tools and resources to advance journalism. It sponsors [research projects on the effectiveness of fact-checking](#) and, in conjunction with the Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network, publishes a newsletter, Factually (subscribe [here](#)). It also offers a list of [news literacy resources for students](#).

[The Center for News Literacy](#), based at Stony Brook University's School of

Journalism in Stony Brook, New York, created the first news literacy curriculum for college-age students in the United States. It also offers an [online news literacy course](#) through Coursera and has developed a variety of [digital news literacy resources](#).

[First Draft](#) based in London and New York City, fights misinformation and disinformation through field work, research and education. Resources include a [free online course on identifying misinformation](#) and a [glossary of misinformation and disinformation terms](#) compiled by First Draft's Claire Wardle, who leads the "Misinformation" lesson in the News Literacy Project's Checkology virtual classroom.

[The Media Literacy Clearinghouse](#) was created by Frank W. Baker, a former broadcast journalist and media literacy instructor, in 1998 to give educators for students in kindergarten through 12th grade (ages 5-18) a site offering age- and grade-appropriate resources for teaching media literacy. It provides tools and information for educators who want to learn more about media literacy and integrate the topic into the classroom.

[News Co/Lab](#) is an initiative from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. It was created in 2017 to help the public find new ways of engaging with news and other information. Its offerings include a ["cookbook" of best practices](#) related to education, equipment, tools and transparency.

[The New York Times Learning Network](#) uses articles, essays, photos, videos and graphics from The New York Times as the basis for a variety of classroom resources — lesson plans, writing prompts, quizzes and student contests — that are published daily during the U.S. school year.

[The Newseum](#) is a museum in Washington, D.C., dedicated to the history and practice of journalism. Its education program, [NewseumED](#), offers classes, programs and digital resources focusing on media literacy and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press).

[PBS NewsHour Extra](#) offers timely lesson plans and resources for teachers and students in grades 7-12 (ages 13-18). Its Student Reporting Labs connect students with local PBS stations and news professionals to create student-generated video news reports.

[The Poynter Institute](#) is a journalism education and research center based in St. Petersburg, Florida. Among its offerings is the [MediaWise](#) digital literacy initiative, which is designed for teens. Poynter is also home to the [International Fact-Checking Network](#), which brings together [fact-checkers from around the world](#) for training and discussion about standards and best practices. IFCN sponsors and partners with the American Press Institute to publish the newsletter Factually (subscribe [here](#)). [Project Look Sharp](#), a media literacy initiative at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York,

develops and provides lesson plans, media materials, training and support for teachers to integrate media literacy and critical-thinking skills into curricula at all levels (though most are designed for students in high school or college). Resources include curriculum kits for U.S. history, global studies, science and the environment, health and psychology, along with a general media literacy course.

[SchoolJournalism.org](http://SchoolJournalism.org), based at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, has compiled a listing of [news literacy lessons and resources](#), including model curricula for English/language arts, math, science and social studies that were prepared by the American Society of News Editors and the Journalism Education Association.

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## News literacy resources: International

### NORTH AMERICA

#### Canada

[MediaSmarts](#), based in Ottawa, Ontario, has been developing digital and media literacy programs for homes, schools and communities since 1996. Its programs help children and teens develop the critical-thinking skills needed to become engaged digital citizens.

[NewsWise](#), a news literacy program for students ages 10-18 (grades 5 through 12), is the product of a partnership between [CIVIX](#) and the [Canadian Journalism Foundation](#), both based in Toronto. Started in 2018, in advance of federal elections in 2019, it is designed to help these students develop habits of news consumption and critical thinking that allow them to become informed citizens.



### SOUTH AMERICA

#### Argentina

[Chequeado](#), based in Buenos Aires, is a digital media project that is dedicated to the verification of public discourse and the promotion of access to information and public data. Founded in 2010, it was the first fact-checking organization in Latin America.

#### Brazil

[Lupa](#), based in Rio de Janeiro and founded in 2015, is Brazil's first fact-checking service. Its educational arm, [LupaEducação](#), offers a course in the basic techniques of fact-checking.

#### Colombia

[FNPI](#), established in 1995 by the Nobel Prize-winning author Gabriel García Márquez, offers programs and workshops to train journalists and citizens in



the ethical and creative use of journalism to tell and share stories that expand understanding and transform reality.

### Peru

[Convoca](#) is a research organization, founded in 2014, that examines journalism through a multidisciplinary approach, including the use of databases and digital narratives as investigative tools.



## EUROPE

### Italy

**The Italian Ministry of Education**, in partnership with Facebook and other technology companies, began offering a [news literacy curriculum for high school students](#) in the 2017-18 school year.

[Osservatorio Permanente Giovani-Editori](#) teaches media literacy to high school and college students through partnerships with some of Italy's best-known print and digital news publications. Students develop critical-thinking skills by becoming aware of the different ways the same story can be reported.

### Slovakia

[Globsec](#) is a nongovernmental organization, based in Bratislava, that offers a [free online course](#) on disinformation and media literacy.

### Spain

[Maldita](#) is a journalism-related nonprofit that sponsors several projects related to the spread of misinformation and disinformation. [Maldita Hemeroteca](#) calls out politicians who make contradictory statements about a topic. [Maldito Bulo](#), a member of the International Fact-Checking Network, works to make debunked information as viral as the hoaxes and falsehoods that rapidly take over social media feeds. [Maldita Ciencia](#) focuses on science-related misinformation. [Maldito Dato](#) is a data transparency project.

### Ukraine

[StopFake](#) was founded to debunk the massive amount of false news about Ukraine coming from Russia during the crisis of 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula and put tens of thousands of troops on its border with Ukraine. Based in Kiev, StopFake also sponsors a [weekly newscast](#) of false reports, featuring the latest Russian propaganda.

### United Kingdom

[BBC Young Reporter](#) is the British Broadcasting Corporation's journalism and media literacy program for schools and young people. It gives students ages 11 to 18 the opportunity to share their stories with BBC editors and journalists and to take part in programs and broadcasting opportunities. It provides access to events, training and resources throughout the year. The website also includes lesson plans for teaching newsgathering skills.

[The National Literacy Project](#), based in London, has resources for educators about false news and media literacy issues.

[NewsWise](#) offers free, high-quality news literacy education resources, experiences and support for teachers of students between ages 9 and 11. Funded by Google, it is a collaborative program involving Guardian journalists and specialists in literacy and PSHE (personal, social, health and economics) education.

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## ASIA

### Singapore

[The Media Literacy Council](#), whose members include representatives from the private sector, the public sector and the general public, promotes public education on media literacy and cyber-wellness and advises the government on appropriate policy responses to the evolving world of media, technology and consumer participation. Its website includes [resources for all ages](#) (some in both English and Chinese), from the youngest citizens through the oldest.

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## AUSTRALIA

[ABC News](#) (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the country's national broadcaster) offers a variety of [news and media literacy resources](#), including a number of [videos created for the country's first Media Literacy Week](#) in September 2018. ABC also partners with RMIT University on [Fact Check](#), which examines the accuracy of statements made by politicians, public figures, advocacy groups and institutions engaged in public debate.

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## Related resources

[Common Sense Media](#), based in San Francisco, California, offers information and guidance to parents and educators about the safe use of technology and media by children and teens.

[iCivics](#) provides lesson plans and other resources that help U.S. educators enhance civics instruction and engagement in their classrooms. (Full disclosure: iCivics is working with the News Literacy Project on the marketing of Checkology virtual classroom student licenses.)

[The National Association for Media Literacy Education](#) is a membership organization that supports the growth of media literacy knowledge throughout the U.S. education system. NAMLE holds an annual conference and sponsors [Media](#)

[\*\*Literacy Week\*\*](#) in early November to bring attention to the need for media literacy education. (Full disclosure: The News Literacy Project is a member of NAMLE.)

[\*\*The Salzburg Academy for Media and Global Change\*\*](#) brings together college students, faculty and media practitioners from around the world for three weeks every summer in Salzburg, Austria, to examine media issues and create global media literacy curricula and learning guides. (The lesson plans, which explore the intersection of media literacy and civil society and are available free of charge, are currently offline; this will be updated with a hyperlink when they are available.)

[\*\*The Trust Project\*\*](#) is a consortium of international news organizations (including The Economist, The Globe and Mail, the Independent Journal Review, La Repubblica, La Stampa and The Washington Post). Based at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California, the Trust Project is developing transparency standards that will enable people to assess the quality of whatever they are reading, watching or hearing.

[\*\*UNESCO\*\*](#) (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has published [\*\*\*Journalism, 'Fake News' & Disinformation\*\*\*](#), a journalism education handbook and model curriculum with seven modules offering guidance on identifying and debunking misinformation and disinformation. Another UNESCO initiative, the [\*\*Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy\*\*](#), offers a variety of resources, including a [\*\*model curriculum\*\*](#) and other [\*\*online tools\*\*](#) for teachers. UNESCO also sponsors [\*\*Global Media and Information Literacy Week\*\*](#).

# NLP's Strategic Overview for 2018-2022

## Theory of change



## The big goal

By 2022, the News Literacy Project will build a community of 20,000 practitioners who, using and supporting NLP programs and services, teach news literacy skills to 3 million middle school and high school students each year and add their voices to support the adoption of news literacy into the American education experience.

### Key metrics (by 2022)

**A community of 20,000 news literacy practitioners, which includes:**

- 10,000 educators using Checkology® annually
- 4,300 educators trained by NLP programs
- 15,000 subscribers to The Sift

**12 NewsLitCamps® a year**

**Ambitious impact metrics for Checkology and NewsLitCamps**

**\$5.25 million annual budget**

**\$3 million organizational reserve fund raised**

**Earned income covering 15% of annual budget**

**Multiyear giving covering 33% of annual budget**

## Primary pillars

1. Increase both the adoption and the measurable student impact of NLP programs (change educator behaviors).
2. Expand NLP's role as the pre-eminent, nonpartisan voice for teaching news literacy in the United States (change public mindsets).
3. Build a national community of news literacy practitioners as advocates for systemic change (change general will).
4. Create the infrastructure and fiscal sustainability to realize this plan in the short term and our vision in the longer term.

## Secondary pillars

1. Provide news literacy tools and resources to the general population.
2. Provide leadership and assistance to organizations teaching news literacy outside the United States.