



A future founded on facts

Annual Report

FY21 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)



“As a Latino woman in society, it is fundamental for me to have the right information at all times. We sometimes are not provided with the right concepts on certain topics because of detrimental biases that affect the way my community is perceived.”

— Ana Rodriguez, Archie Williams High School student and NLP’s 2021 Gwen Ifill Student of the Year

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Dear Friends of NLP,

Current events continue to underscore that news literacy education is essential for the future of a healthy democracy.

For too many, trust in institutions, including the media, has ruptured. They no longer find facts convincing; feelings hold sway, and conspiratorial thinking has moved into the mainstream. The voting rights of all our citizens and the sanctity of our election system face ongoing threats. We've seen renewed evidence of the role of Facebook and other social media platforms in exacerbating political polarization and extremism. We are enduring a stress test of our democracy that has continued throughout the pandemic, the 2020 presidential election and the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

We recognized in early 2020 that misinformation poses such an existential threat to our democracy that we needed to extend our reach beyond students to all generations. We developed new resources for the general public and launched a comprehensive campaign to combat election misinformation during the 2020 election, including a series of public service announcements in English and Spanish. We also hosted the inaugural season of our podcast, *Is that a fact?*, which explored the question, "How can American democracy survive and thrive in our toxic information environment?"

At the same time, we made great progress on the education front. During the 2020-21 school year, we reached more students and educators than at any other point in NLP's history, with over

108,000 students active on Checkology® and more than 13,000 educators across the country using our resources. We enhanced our support of educators by creating additional professional learning opportunities and opening our virtual NewsLitCamp® events to participants nationwide. We also launched NewsLit Nation, our 48,000-plus member network for educators, and our News Literacy Ambassador Program, which supports grassroots community organizing efforts for news literacy education.

You helped make all this progress possible. We hope that as you read this annual report, you'll take pride in these accomplishments.

But we still have much work to do.

The country is deeply divided along partisan lines and separated into media echo chambers. News literacy education is one key to bridging this divide. We all need the skills to know what news and information to trust, share and act on. Our democracy depends on our collective engagement in the pursuit of a fact-based future.

Thank you for joining us in our fight for a future founded on facts.

Sincerely yours,



Greg McCaffery, Board Chair



Alan C. Miller, Founder and CEO

What is News Literacy?

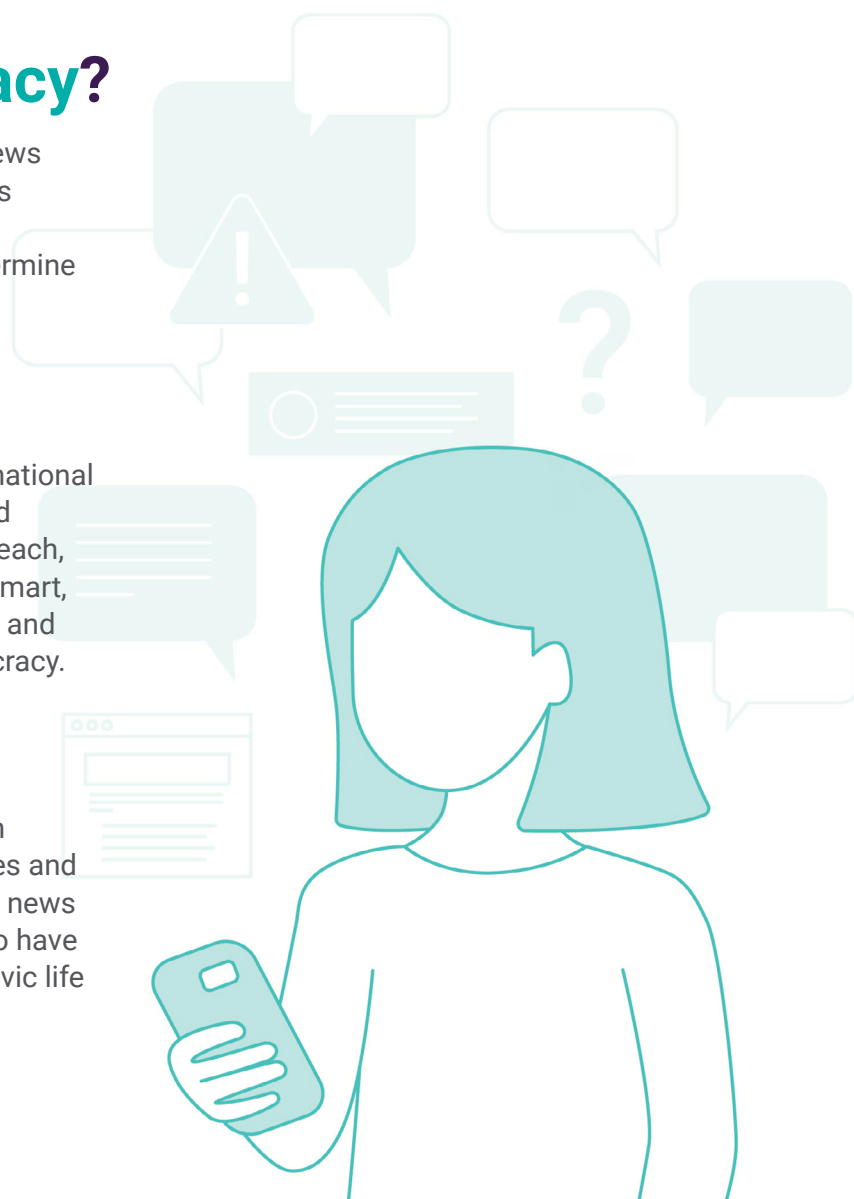
The ability to determine the credibility of news and other content, to identify different types of information, and to use the standards of authoritative, fact-based journalism to determine what to trust, share and act on.

Our Mission

The News Literacy Project, a nonpartisan national education nonprofit, provides programs and resources for educators and the public to teach, learn and share the abilities needed to be smart, active consumers of news and information and equal and engaged participants in a democracy.

Our Vision

News literacy is embedded in the American education experience, and people of all ages and backgrounds know how to identify credible news and other information, empowering them to have an equal opportunity to participate in the civic life of their communities and the country.



Organizational Values



What we believe

- News literacy is an essential life skill.
- Facts matter.
- A free press is a cornerstone of democracy.

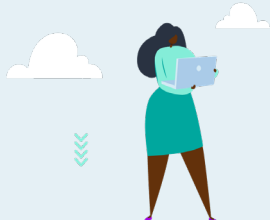
Read more about our values [here](#).

How we achieve what we believe

- Innovation.
- Independence and nonpartisanship.
- Inclusion and diversity.
- Collaboration.

Educator Resources

checkology®



Selected “**Best Digital Tool for Teaching and Learning**” by the [American Association of School Librarians](#).



108,437
active students



2,753
active educators



50
states + D.C.

Checkology's Impact

NLP's browser-based platform designed for students in grades 6-12 helps prepare the next generation to easily identify misinformation. During the 2020-21 school year, after completing Checkology lessons:



Eight in 10 (81%)

students could correctly identify the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment.



Nearly two-thirds (61%)

of students could correctly identify the traits of quality journalism.



More than 2x

the number of students could demonstrate an understanding of the watchdog role of the press.



Almost 4 in 5 (79%)

of students reported that they were more inclined to engage in one or more civic activities.

NLP counted some of the country's largest school districts among our Checkology partners: statewide districts in Hawaii, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Iowa, and 17 individual school districts, including New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago — the nation's three largest.

Notably, we are seeing Checkology used by more educators in geographic areas that represent the full political and ideological spectrum, from Birmingham, Alabama; Nashville, Tennessee; and Lexington, South Carolina to Brookline, Massachusetts; Spokane, Washington, and numerous other cities, counties, states and regions.



NLP also saw tremendous growth in content for Checkology over the last year. This included publishing a new two-part lesson

on **conspiratorial thinking**; creating an enhanced **resource library** for educators, including lesson plans, classroom activities, posters and infographics, quizzes and more; and **assessing Checkology's alignment** with over 130 distinct English Language Arts, social studies and library program TEKS standards.

NewsLitCamp®

NewsLitCamps hosted across the U.S. in FY21 8 events • 1,112 educators

NewsLitCamps connect educators with practicing journalists for a day-long professional development experience hosted in partnership with a newsroom. During the 2020-21 school year, NLCs were conducted virtually, five with local school districts and news outlets in their communities and three that were nationwide.



Miami

OCT. 23, 2020

Univision

San José, CA

DEC. 2 - 3, 2020

NBC Bay Area

National

DEC. 10, 2020

The Texas Tribune

National

JAN. 26, 2021

CNN Worldwide

Illinois

FEB. 25, 2021

Block Club Chicago
Chicago Defender
ProPublica Illinois
BGA
Rockford Register Star

Columbia, SC

MAY 14 & 21, 2021

South Carolina ETV and
Public Radio
The Post and Courier

National

JUNE 3, 2021

The Wall Street Journal

Minnesota

JUNE 15, 2021

The Star Tribune
MPR News

“As a school Librarian, I bring so much of this back to my teachers and students. **This is more important than ever** that our students not only know how to read but how to evaluate what they are reading.”

— Christina Wilkins, middle school librarian, Springfield, Missouri

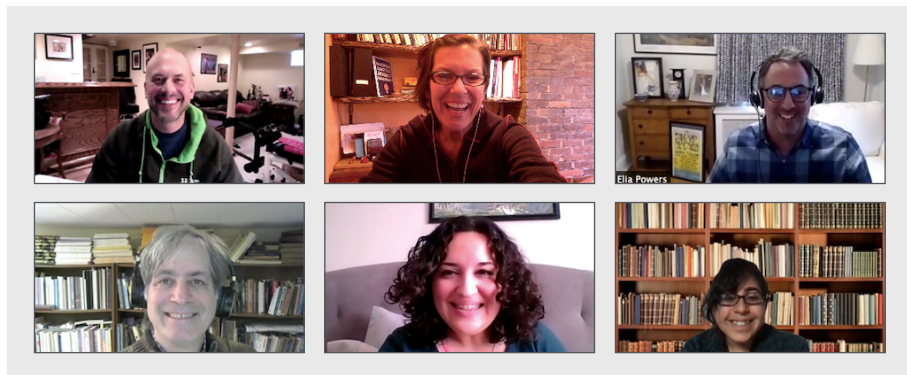


[What Is NewsLitCamp?](#)

Professional Learning

4,700 educators

Educators across the country attended unique professional learning opportunities, such as “Exploring the misinformation landscape,” “Understanding bias” and “Teaching digital verification.”



15,384 subscribers

The Sift is an educator-focused newsletter sent weekly during the school year that explores timely examples of misinformation, addresses media and press freedom topics and discusses social media trends and issues. It includes discussion prompts, classroom activities and links to additional material.

Viral rumor rundown



NO: There is [no evidence](#) that Black Lives Matter activists or anyone identifying as “Antifa” — an unofficial anti-fascism movement — started a fire at a church in Minneapolis on April 19. **YES:** The church caught fire the night before the verdict in the Derek Chauvin murder trial. **YES:** A Minneapolis Fire Department official [told The Catholic Spirit](#), a publication of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, “There [are] no indications that the fire is associated with any civil unrest.” **NO:** The Instagram account that shared this rumor — @republicanparty — is [not the official account](#) of the Republican Party.

“New additions to The Sift such as **News Goggles** and **Featured Rumor Resource** classroom-ready slides have been game changers.

Connecting with local journalists and content developers is a great way to connect students to the boots on the ground!”

— Conor Murphy, high school teacher, Camillus, New York

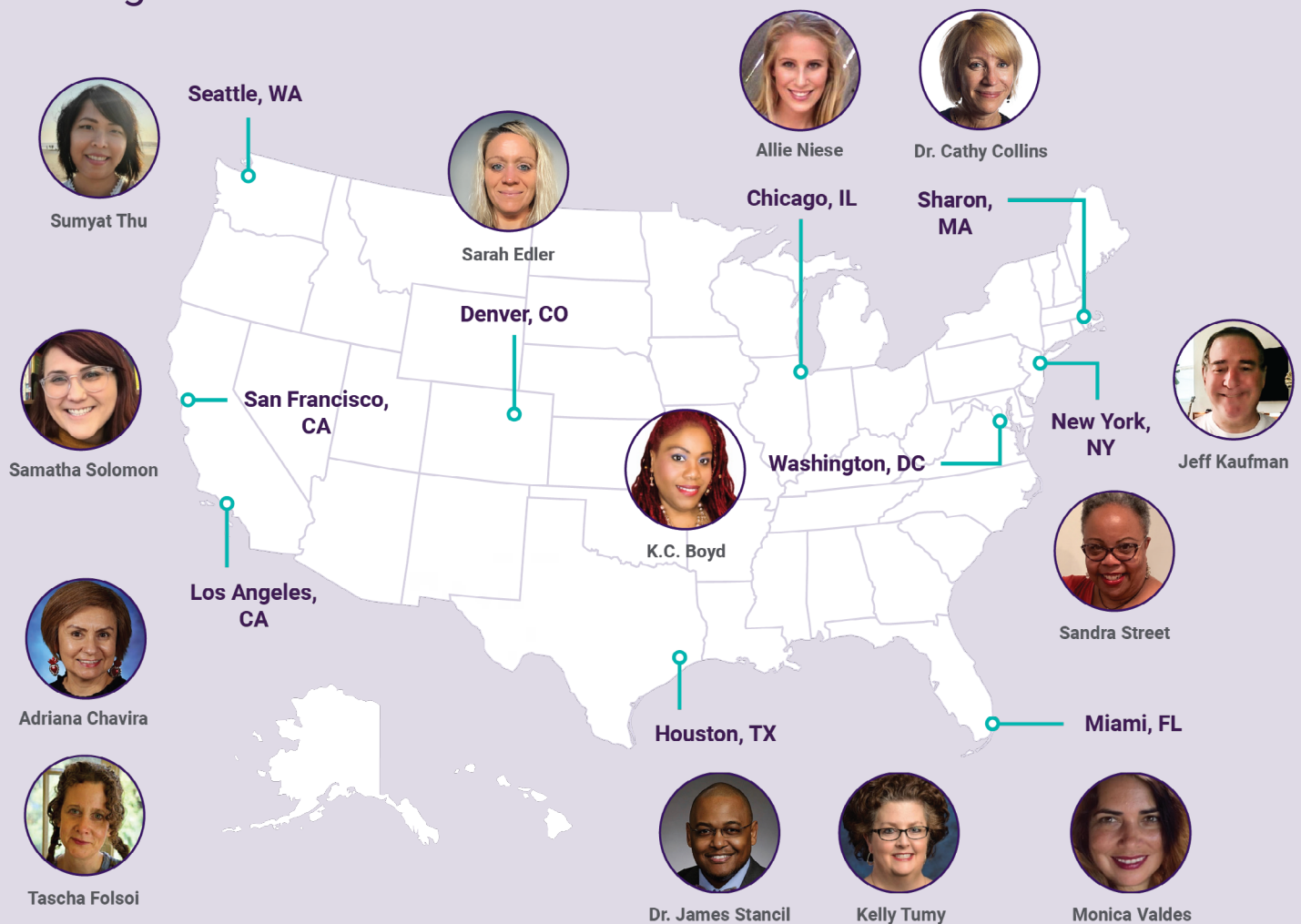


NewsLit NATION

NLP successfully launched two initiatives that create a sense of community for news literacy educators: **NewsLit Nation**, NLP's official home for our 48,000-plus member community of teachers, librarians and news literacy advocates, and a **News Literacy Ambassador Program**. News literacy ambassadors are working to build a footprint for community organizing efforts in the fight against misinformation. Both initiatives are part of a

regional movement-building model designed around 10 hub cities for the 2020-21 school year — Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Denver, Houston, Chicago, Boston, New York City, Washington, D.C., and Miami — to champion news literacy education at the local level. NLP's ambassadors held 22 virtual events — workshops, webinars, presentations, panel discussions and community meetings — reaching a total of 754 educators and librarians.

News Literacy Ambassador Program 2020-21 Cohort



Teachers share how they used NLP's resources to **teach news literacy** in a challenging year:



K.C. Boyd

library media specialist and NLP Ambassador,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Boyd used The Sift, NLP's free weekly newsletter for educators, to "jump start" her news literacy lessons. When the jury delivered its verdict convicting former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd, Boyd discussed the five core values of journalism with students in her "Media Studies" class.

"I knew that day that my students were going to be inundated with a tremendous amount of information and, unfortunately, misinformation. So, I was looking for a lot of material that would help remind them to seek out credible sources," she says.

"This platform has been a tremendous support and help in my instructional program." Her lesson, inspired by The Sift, focused on preparing students to actively seek out credible information concerning the trial and verdict.



Patricia Russac

history teacher and library director,
ROSLYN, NY

Russac taught in a hybrid learning environment this year and says the act of "teaching out and teaching in" was not easy. She used Checkology with sixth- and seventh-graders to build their news literacy skills and noted that Checkology worked well "because the resources are so accessible to remote learners as well as to students in the room." After each lesson segment, Russac gave students the opportunity to ask questions and participate in class discussions. "The students had plenty to share about what they heard, saw and viewed online," she says.

"It was a powerful reminder as to why news literacy education should be part of every grade level and across subjects. It is not enough to teach it just in the humanities. Math and science need news literacy education as well. Data matters."

Resources for Everyone

NLP embarked on an entirely new line of work — the development and launch of a suite of free resources designed for use outside of the classroom setting by people of all ages. We also increased our efforts to combat misinformation on a national scale. Metrics are for July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021.



Customized for the public, this version of [Checkology](#) provides a comprehensive news literacy program at no cost. It includes foundational lessons, supplemental practice opportunities and fact-checking tools for reverse image searches, geolocation and more.



20,978 subscribers

Modeled on The Sift newsletter for educators, [Get Smart About News](#) is designed for everyone. It explores timely examples of misinformation, addresses media and press freedom topics and discusses social media trends and issues.



4,741 downloads

Our free mobile app, [Informable](#), helps people of all ages practice four distinct news literacy skills using real-world examples in a game-like format.

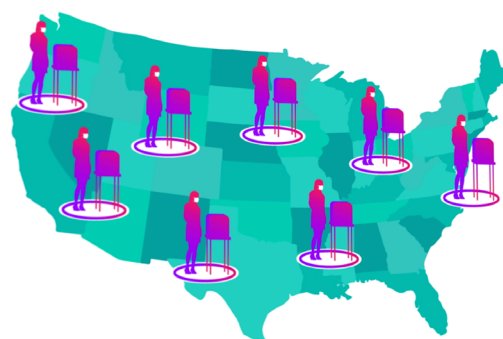


In September 2020, NLP launched its podcast [Is that a fact?](#) Hosted by Darragh Worland, NLP's vice president of creative services and a former journalist, the inaugural 10-episode season featured conversations with leading American thinkers, journalists, foreign policy experts, psychologists and authors. It explored how access to reliable information — a core element of American democracy — became threatened and how our democracy can survive the impact of misinformation.

Election Misinformation Campaign

Voting depends on you.
Democracy depends on us.

From September to November 2020, NLP conducted a successful nonpartisan, nationwide [election response effort](#) designed to combat malicious attempts to mislead voters and suppress voting. This was our widest-reaching news literacy campaign to date and included public service announcements (in both English and Spanish), digital ads, a webpage, webinar series and weekly email briefings. In addition, NLP was cited as a subject matter expert in [over 20 news articles](#) on mis- and disinformation and the election. Our work helped voters discern credible sources of information regarding early voting, voting by mail, and other alternatives to long voting lines at polling places. News literacy skills help protect every voter's right to make their vote count and build the essential critical thinking skills needed long after an election to remain engaged and informed participants in our country's democracy. Read the [full impact report](#) [here](#).



Combating COVID-19 misinformation

NLP redirected substantial resources to address what the World Health Organization dubbed an “infodemic” — the overabundance of information, including false information, about COVID-19. This [campaign](#) to combat misinformation included a webpage, a professional development webinar series for educators, a four-part webinar series for the general public, weekly email briefings and media inquiries that resulted in more than three dozen interviews with NLP staff experts. We also produced a special episode of our podcast, *Is that a fact?*, to explore why some people remain hesitant

to get one of the COVID-19 vaccines and find out just how much misinformation might be to blame for that reluctance.



2021 Change-Makers

In recognition of their outstanding achievements during the 2020-21 school year, NLP named the recipients of its educator, journalist and students of the year awards in June. Honorees are recognized as having distinguished themselves in their commitment to news literacy in their classrooms, in their professions and in their daily lives. The awards also acknowledge their efforts as leading voices in support of news literacy education. We are grateful for their contributions in the fight for facts. Recipients are selected by a committee of NLP board members and staff.



EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Kelly Vikstrom-Hoyt

Director of library services, The Overlake School in Redmond, Washington

It didn't take the tumultuous events of 2020 and the accompanying flood of misinformation to convince educator Kelly Vikstrom-Hoyt that news literacy should be part of every school's curriculum. She already knew it. "As the librarian, I consider it my duty to integrate news literacy across as many areas of the curriculum as I can," Vikstrom-Hoyt told NLP.

As a news literacy leader at her school, Vikstrom-Hoyt saw proof that students absorbed what they learned and applied it to other disciplines. For example, an eighth-grade civics class that completed the Checkology lesson on bias in the media then worked on projects for their civics teacher using what they had studied. "The teachers told me that {students} incorporated a lot of the language and the lessons they learned into that project without even being prompted to do it," Vikstrom-Hoyt said. "Then, even better, when they did the next project down the line that wasn't even tied to the lesson, they were still pulling in those skills, and naming the terms and the things that I taught them in the Checkology lesson."



JOHN S. CARROLL

JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Alisyn Camerota

Co-host, *CNN Newsroom*

Alisyn Camerota has provided unflinching coverage and vital and verified information on major news stories to millions of people as a leading broadcast journalist.

She also has seen misinformation increasingly pollute the information landscape. If such distortions and falsehoods are not called out and corrected, she says, real harm can occur, which is what happened during the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

"People stormed the Capitol because they had misinformation. They were fed falsehoods and lies about the election, and they didn't know that," Camerota said during an interview with NLP. "You can have your own conspiracy theories, but you can't have your own facts."

Camerota has been involved with NLP since 2017 and is a member of our National Leadership Council.

"I'm really touched and flattered to receive the John S. Carroll Award, particularly this year," Camerota said. "It has been a really challenging year for journalism to be able to broadcast during a global pandemic."

Watch the award presentation and honoree stories here.



GWEN IFILL
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Ana Rodriguez

Archie Williams High School, San Anselmo, California

Like many teens, Ana Rodriguez, 15, turns to social media to find out what is going on in the world.

"A few years ago, I wouldn't have checked my sources or the sources the articles that I'm reading about come from, but now I would definitely do that because I don't want to be sharing false information to the people around me," she said.

Rodriguez used Checkology in her 10th-grade English class and learned about bias and misinformation, helping her complete an interdisciplinary project. She examined the long and harmful history of racial bias in scientific thinking, from eugenics to contemporary medical discrimination.

"Being able to distinguish reliable information from detrimental bias has been of great importance in my life. It has allowed me to help my parents and other family members during the COVID-19 pandemic," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said the award "has given me the sense that I accomplished something very big, and that I can be successful with the things that I do."



GWEN IFILL
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Mirudulaa Suginathan Yamini

Central Middle School, Quincy, Massachusetts

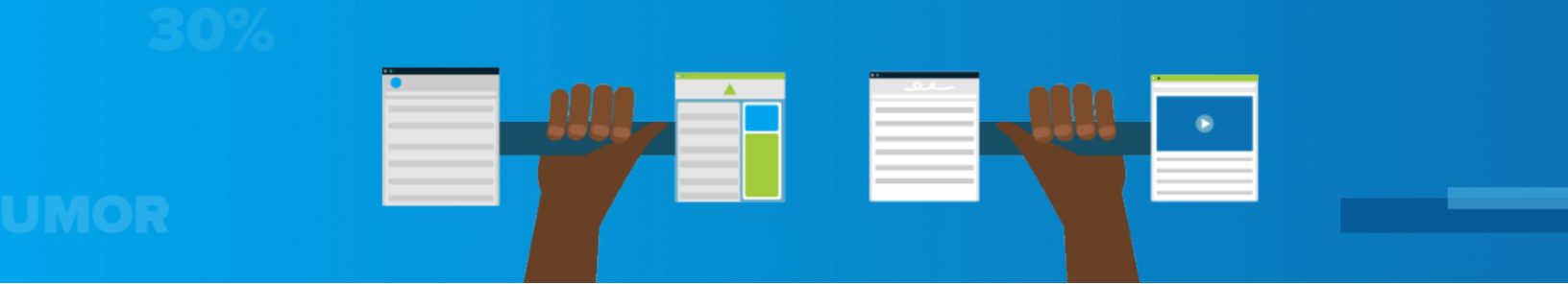
Mirudulaa Suginathan Yamini, 13, always had assumed that misinformation did not affect her. Then, last year she learned how it could fool her and how fast and how far it can spread.

"I read a really interesting post and sent it to so many of my friends. But when I was reading it for the 10th time or so, I realized it wasn't real news. It was fake," she told NLP.

"I had to tell all the friends I'd sent the post to stop spreading it and why it's not credible and not reliable," Yamini said. "But it was already too late. They sent it to their friends and so on."

When she entered eighth grade, Yamini used Checkology as part of a media class and said she feels empowered by her news literacy lessons.

"I showed my parents many of the tools I saw in Checkology. Even they felt it was a big impact on their life. They changed. They stopped viewing some of the websites that they thought they could rely on," Yamini said. And, she added, they were even more proud of her than before.



National News Literacy Week 2021

“Get NewsLit Fit”

NLP’s second annual National News Literacy Week (NNLW), presented with The E.W. Scripps Company, was held Jan. 25-29. NNLW is a nationwide public awareness campaign with events, public service announcements and social media engagement to focus attention on the importance of news literacy as an essential 21st century skill for all ages. Messaging played on this year’s theme of “Get NewsLit Fit” and encouraged audiences to “Exercise your right to be well-informed,” “Be a healthy news consumer” and “Test your news literacy fitness.” Read the **full 2021 impact report** [here](#).



Save the date for
National News Literacy Week 2022

"Over the past 20 years, misinformation has become the primary driver of the polarization of our society and the greatest risk to our democracy. It has become a fundamental and effective tool for political parties for undermining our values, science, and thoughtful solutions.

A society that can no longer agree on scientific and historical facts cannot thrive."

— Tom Ellis, Visionary Circle Member, Wisconsin

Metrics

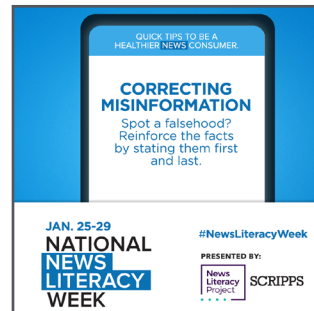
NNLW’s public service awareness campaign achieved **57 million impressions** on **213 television stations** and **201 radio stations**. The total earned media during NNLW reached **76.3 million impressions**.

National brands

Spelling Bee
teacher newsletter:
**67,500
impressions.**

Simplemost
stories on social:
**194,000
impressions.**

Newsy audience
emails blasts:
**372,000
impressions.**



Board of Directors and National Leadership Council

NLP is grateful for the support and guidance from our Board of Directors and our National Leadership Council. We appreciate their partnership. Without their dedication to news literacy, our work would not be possible.

Board of Directors

- Enrique Acevedo
- Whit Ayres
- Geraldine Baum (secretary)
- Tucker Eskew
- Eva Haller
- Peter Kadzik (treasurer)
- Greg McCaffery (chair)
- Alan C. Miller
- Walt Mossberg
- Molly Hill Patten
- Abby Phillip
- Bridgett Price
- Liz Ramos
- Juliet Stipeche
- Christina Van Tassell
- Karen Wickre (vice chair)

National Leadership Council

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Kim Brizzolara | Wesley Lowery |
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| Matea Gold | Amy Weisenbach |
| Jessica Guff | Catherine Woodard |
| Peter Herzberg | |
| Leslie Hill | |
| Bill Keller | |
| Rob King | |

Lists reflect members who served for any period during July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021.



“Unless we train people to think critically and to detect and reject misinformation, **our democracy will be in grave danger**. NLP is literally in the business of saving democracy.”

— Walt Mossberg, NLP board member, Washington D.C.

Donors

The following individuals and organizations supported our work in FY20. Without their support, our mission to scale our resources could not have moved forward.

Leadership Gifts

Pulitzers (\$1M+)

Apple*

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation*

Champions (\$500,000 - \$999,999)

Investors

(\$250,000 - \$499,999)

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The Smart Family Fund

Visionary Circle Gifts

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 Nicole Kule Seiff
 Peter Sagal
 Pierre Thomas and Alyson Westbrooks Thomas
 Rahul Nand
 Robert and Sheri Rosenfeld
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 Sheila Solomon
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 Stefan Holt
 Stephen Dull Foundation
 The Judith L. Bader Charitable Gift Fund
 The Michael Schilmoeller and Katie Larsell Charitable Fund
 Thomas Campbell Jackson and Pamela Brandt Jackson
 Tom and Nancy Ellis
 Tucker Eskew

The Visionary Circle is a thriving group of philanthropic leaders who support the mission of the News Literacy Project and enjoy exclusive benefits and access to NLP programs and leaders.

Learn more at newslit.org/vision.

In-kind Giving

Bangor Daily News
 BuzzFeed
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 Comcast
 Local Media Association
 Local Media Consortium
 Los Angeles Times
 National Public Radio
 ProPublica
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 The Associated Press
 The Day Publishing Company
 The E.W. Scripps Company
 The New York Times
 The New Yorker
 The Valley Breeze
 The Wall Street Journal
 The Washington Post
 Vox Media

** denotes multi-year contributions recognized at the level of the total amount.*

"In my 72-year-old view, our democracy is at a critical crossroads, due to the proliferation of misinformation and outright lies, mainly in social and fringe media. **Education on this topic is vital;** I can think of no better place to start than engaging, educating and equipping young people with the skills to know the difference between truth and fiction in news and information."

— Sandra Nelson, Visionary Circle Member, Minnesota

Financials

FY21 Expenses and Revenue

FY21 audit performed by GRF CPAs & Advisors



Expenses	
Program Services:	\$ 3,250,105
<u>Supporting Services</u>	
Management/general:	\$ 840,600
Fundraising:	\$ 580,104
<hr/>	
Total expenses:	\$ 4,670,809

Revenue	
Grants and contributions:	\$ 2,917,210
Net assets released from donor restrictions:	\$ 2,544,020
In-kind contributions:	\$ 238,956
Interest and investment income:	\$ 82,124
Program income:	\$ 15,052
<hr/>	
Total revenue:	\$ 5,797,362

Statement of Activities and Change in Net Assets

Support and Revenue		Without donor restrictions	With donor restrictions	Total
	Grants and contributions	\$ 2,917,210	\$ 1,653,658	\$ 4,570,868
	Program income	\$ 15,052	—	\$ 15,052
	In-kind contributions	\$ 238,956	—	\$ 238,956
	Interest and investment income	\$ 82,124	—	\$ 82,124
	Net assets released from donor restrictions	\$ 2,544,020	(\$ 2,544,020)	—
	Total support and revenue	\$ 5,797,362	(\$ 890,362)	\$ 4,907,000

Expenses	Program Services		
	Total Program Services	\$ 3,250,105	\$ 3,250,105
	Supporting Services		
	Management/general	\$ 840,600	\$ 840,600
	Fundraising	\$ 580,104	\$ 580,104
	Total Supporting Services	\$ 1,420,704	\$ 1,420,704
	Total expenses	\$ 4,670,809	\$ 4,670,809

Change in net assets	\$ 1,126,553	- \$ 890,362	\$ 236,191
Net assets at beginning of period	\$ 2,266,540	\$ 4,590,781	\$ 6,857,321
Net assets at end of period	\$ 3,393,093	\$ 3,700,419	\$ 7,093,512



Contact Us

For inquiries about financially supporting our work:

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cborgelt@newslit.org

For media inquiries:

Gina Physic, senior manager of media relations
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For interviews/speaking requests:

Mike Webb, senior vice president of communications
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