



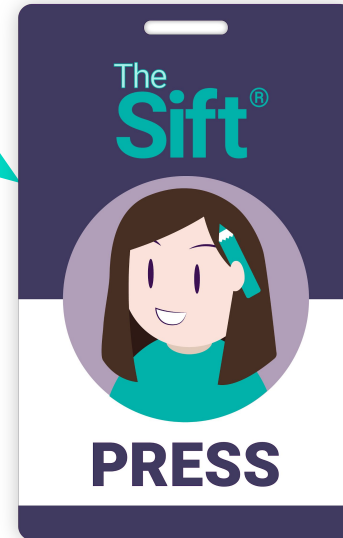
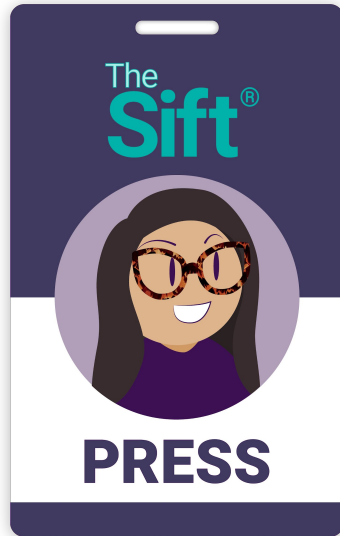
The Sift[®] News Goggles

Corrections and clarifications: Accuracy and correcting the record

Dec. 14, 2020

First things first

- Be sure to view these slides in presentation mode.
- Suzannah and Hannah, former reporters who work at NLP, are going to help you examine this topic through journalists' eyes.



Quality news organizations take factual inaccuracies very seriously when they occasionally occur. Being transparent about mistakes — and accountable for them — is a key characteristic that separates credible news organizations from other sources of information. Let's take a look at several recent news reports that contained errors and examine how the different news organizations involved handled the corrections. Grab your news goggles. Let's go!



Example 1: CNN

Controversial Princess Diana interview from 1995 is under investigation again



By [Alexis Benveniste](#), CNN Business

Updated 5:49 PM ET, Sun December 6, 2020



MORE FROM CNN BUSINESS

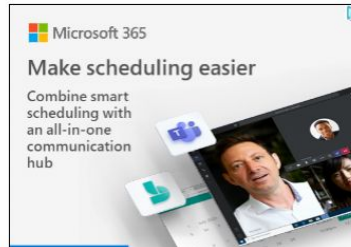


Stelter: Why isn't anyone intervening with Trump?



Rauch: Trump has mastered the 'firehose of falsehood'

Recommended by  Outbrain



Click [here](#) to read the full report.



Here's the story! At the bottom of the report, here's what we see...

Bashir has not defended himself publicly, and he did not respond to CNN's request for comment. He is currently on leave, recovering from heart surgery and complications from Covid-19, according to a statement from BBC.

-- CNN's Max Foster contributed to this report.

Correction: A previous version of this story incorrectly stated the year of the BBC interview. It was conducted in 1995.



I would describe this as a typical correction. I don't know about you, Hannah, but years and dates are the kinds of facts that I would check several times during the editing process before publication. Even though an editor also checked facts, I would usually print out a copy of a draft of my stories, highlight information that needed to be fact-checked and then put a check mark after I verified it. After all, it was my name on the story. When I wanted to double-check my fact-check, I would refer to this highlighted printout with my check marks until publication.

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Agreed! I did the same. I would obsessively check and recheck that printed hard copy of my story right up to the moment it was published. (And even wake up in the middle of the night to double-check things!) These are the kinds of errors that fact-checking and careful copy editing often catch. And while errors do occasionally slip through, it's important to note that out of all the news reports published by a standards-based news organization, only a small percentage require corrections.

Example 2: The New York Times

The New York Times

Betsy Wade, First Woman to Edit News at The Times, Dies at 91

In a 45-year Times career, she also became the first woman to lead the Newspaper Guild of New York and fought a sex discrimination case against the paper.



Click [here](#) to read the full obituary.



Here's the story! It's an obituary. At the bottom, here's what we see...

Michael Levenson contributed reporting.

Correction: Dec. 4, 2020

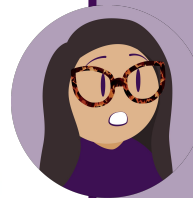
An earlier version of this obituary misspelled the surname of a journalist in whose name a journalism scholarship program for women was established. (Ms. Wade was a member of its board.) She was Anne O'Hare McCormick, not McCormack.

Correction: Dec. 8, 2020

An earlier version of this obituary misidentified one of the journalism schools for which scholarships for women are endowed by the Anne O'Hare McCormick Memorial Fund, of which Ms. Wade was a board member. It is the City University of New York journalism school, not City College of New York.

Robert D. McFadden is a senior writer on the Obituaries desk and the winner of the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for spot news reporting. He joined The Times in May 1961 and is also the co-author of two books.

A version of this article appears in print on Dec. 5, 2020, Section A, Page 20 of the New York edition with the headline: Betsy Wade, the First Woman to Edit News Copy at The Times, Is Dead at 91. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)



Ouch! A double. I've had to do a double correction before, and it is an extra-painful correction experience! It still hurts to think about it.



Same. Name spelling mistakes were especially upsetting. I'm not sure if people realize how seriously journalists take corrections. Any inaccuracy hurts, and I still get anxious thinking about mistakes from years ago! Also, look: This journalist is a Pulitzer Prize winner with decades of experience. Mistakes happen even to veteran journalists. What matters is that errors get corrected.



Michael Levenson contributed reporting.

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Note that the two corrections ran on different days. While the story was published on Dec. 3, the first correction was published the next day, and the second correction, on Dec. 8. Sometimes a news organization does not become aware of an error for days or longer. But when an error is discovered, journalists don't sit on the correction — they run it right away for transparency's sake and to correct the record.



Example 3: Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL8N2IO198>

 **U.S.**

CORRECTED-Four lions at Spanish zoo test positive for COVID-19

Four lions at Barcelona Zoo have tested positive for COVID-19, veterinary authorities said on Tuesday, in one of just a handful of documented cases globally in which large felines have contracted coronavirus. (45 kB) ▼

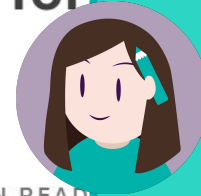
Click [here](#) to read the full report.

This is interesting! This correction is clearly identified in the story preview, which means it appears on search results. When we click on this report, here's what we see...

Four lions at Spanish zoo test positive for COVID-19

By Reuters Staff

2 MIN READ



Unlike CNN and the New York Times, these corrections appear at the beginning of the story, rather than the end. Which placement do you think is best? Why?

(Corrects paragraphs 1, 6 and 7 in Dec. 8 story to remove reference to this being the second case, adds Zoo Knoxville case.)

BARCELONA (Reuters) - Four lions at Barcelona Zoo have tested positive for COVID-19, veterinary authorities said on Tuesday, in one of just a handful of documented cases globally in which large felines have contracted coronavirus.



Former Reuters reporter who has had to run corrections here! Reuters is a global news wire service and very transparent in its corrections. Not only is the word "CORRECTED" added as a headline tag to the corrected report published on the wire (as seen in the last slide), but the correction text appears near the top and above the story text in parentheses, explains what is being corrected and exactly where the error occurred in the story.

OFFICIAL CORRECTION-Some workers given priority in Irish COVID-19 vaccine rollout

...(Corrects headline, first, fifth paragraph to show highest 'key...

DECEMBER 08, 2020 02:53PM EST

Click [here](#) to read the full report.



This is another Reuters report published on the same day that also required a correction. But this one is different: It's called an ["official correction."](#) This official correction reflects that an error was made as a result of inaccurate information provided to Reuters by a source. Journalists work with the best information that they have at the time of publication.



Official or not, corrections must run and are signs of a news organization's credibility — they show transparency, accountability and a commitment to accuracy. Quality news organizations don't just make changes without noting the correction, or delete stories altogether as though they never existed.

Corrections are also important for future coverage on the topic. Reporters often refer to, rely on and use previous coverage by their news organization. Not running a correction could cause the error to be repeated.

Example 4: Arizona Republic

Corrections & Clarifications

Arizona Republic

Published 8:57 a.m. MT May 6, 2019 | Updated 10:55 a.m. MT Dec. 10, 2020

[View Comments](#)



To report Corrections & Clarifications, contact:

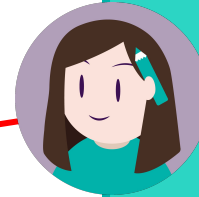
Phone: 602-444-6397

Email: accuracy@arizonarepublic.com

Please indicate whether you're responding to content online or in the newspaper.

The following Corrections & Clarifications have been published on stories produced by The Arizona Republic/azcentral.com's newsroom:

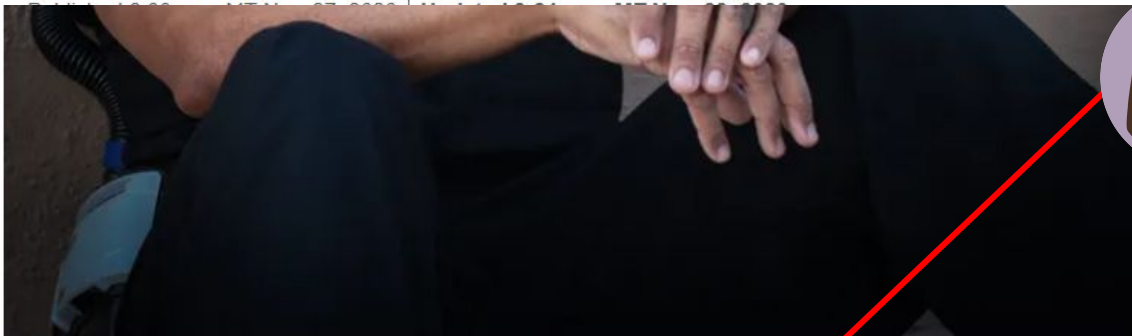
Click [here](#) to see this page.



Some news organizations have an entire page on their websites dedicated to corrections. Here's what I found for the Arizona Republic. Notice that this page explains how to contact the newsroom to report any errors. On the next slide, let's look at a recent correction listed here.

Yuma doctor says Arizona has shortage of ICU beds, staff as COVID-19 cases surge

Madeline Ackley Arizona Republic



Dr. Cleavon Gilman works at Yuma Regional Medical Center and said he was told on Nov. 22 no hospital in the state was accepting transfer ICU patients. Courtesy Dr. Cleavon Gilman

Corrections & Clarifications: A previous version of this article incorrectly characterized Gov. Doug Ducey's executive order about allowing events with more than 50 people. Individual municipalities also must approve them.

Dr. Cleavon Gilman was shocked when he came into work at Yuma Regional



Here's the story!

And here's the correction. Similar to Reuters, it appears near the top of the story.



Some newsrooms distinguish between corrections and clarifications. Clarifications occur when information may be factually correct but perhaps is missing important details or context. Here, it looks like the report "incorrectly characterized" an executive order described in the story. Journalists take both types of mistakes seriously.

Example 5: Chicago Tribune

Corrections and clarifications

CHICAGO TRIBUNE | DEC 07, 2020 AT 5:09 PM

- An editorial on Sunday listing House Democrats who opposed Speaker Michael Madigan's reelection should have included Rep. Jonathan Carroll of Northbrook.
- An op-ed in Saturday's editions misidentified the Chicago radio station where "King B" Ron Britain gained fame. He was a member of the on-air talent at WCFL-AM 1000.

The Tribune regrets the errors.

Publishing information quickly and accurately is a central part of the Chicago Tribune's news responsibility and a value shared in all our publications. Our editorial code of principles governs professional behavior and journalism standards. Everyone in our newsroom must agree to live up to this code of conduct. [Download the file.](#)

Click [here](#) to see this page.



Similar to the Arizona Republic, the Chicago Tribune also has a page on its website for corrections and clarifications. Here we find recent mistakes listed. And take a look at this line: "The Tribune regrets the errors." Journalists know their credibility depends on accuracy. As a reporter, I wanted nothing more than to get the story right. I actually *appreciated* when readers, sources or others pointed out mistakes so that I could fix them.

Corrections and clarifications

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Publishing information quickly and accurately is a central part of the Chicago Tribune news responsibility and a value shared in all our publications. Our editorial code of principles governs professional behavior and journalism standards. Everyone in our newsroom must agree to live up to this code of conduct. [Download the file.](#)

Click [here](#) to see this page.



Between the two — corrections and clarifications — a clarification is considered by journalists to be a lesser offense, but neither feels great.



Here the Tribune explains that accuracy is part of its "news responsibility" and "a value."

The news organization also points to the standards, principles and conduct that its journalists are expected to abide by. And there's a link to those guidelines so readers can view them. Every legitimate newsroom has a similar set of standards and ethics that is publicly available.

Note: New research reveals that Johns Hopkins, founder of the university and hospital that bear his name and long considered a “staunch abolitionist,” actually owned slaves, according to [a Baltimore Sun news report](#). The reporting helps underscore the importance of correcting the historical record when new information comes to light — even decades later.

News Goggles: Next steps

Discuss: Why is it important for news organizations to correct inaccuracies? How does correcting mistakes make a news source more trustworthy? How often do standards-based sources of news make errors of fact? What types of errors are the most common?

Idea: Ask students to research corrections policies and standards posted online for a few local news organizations. How do these policies compare? Do the policies outline how to contact the newsrooms about mistakes? Connect your students with one of NLP's journalist volunteers using the [Checkology journalist directory](#) and have a conversation about errors and corrections. Discuss the steps the journalist takes to prevent corrections and how they correct factual inaccuracies when they occur.

News Goggles: Next steps

Another idea: Select one of the news reports included in this week's slides. To demonstrate the number of facts that journalists are verifying in a typical news report, ask students to tally the facts in the selected article. Be sure the students look for name spellings, job titles, organization names, dates, locations, quotes, etc. How would students go about fact-checking this report?

Resources: ["Practicing Quality Journalism"](#) (NLP's Checkology® virtual classroom) and [Newsroom to Classroom](#) (NLP's Checkology® directory of journalist volunteers).





This exercise originated in the Dec. 14, 2020, issue of The Sift® newsletter from the News Literacy Project. You can read archives of the newsletter and subscribe [here](#).



Thank you!



A future founded on facts



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NewsLitProject



Youtube.com/
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newslit.org