

The News-Driven Ecosystem

News Literacy Project

newslit.org

WHAT IS NEWS?

The primary purpose of news is to inform through independent, honest and open-minded inquiry.

Independent journalists

Standards-based newsrooms

Journalism

The "News Tree"

Think of news like a tree anchoring this ecosystem.

The public

Content about news

Content about news can help keep you informed, but it can't replace the journalism it relies on. This includes:

BARKING

Satirical "news"

websites and skits that parody the reporting style of traditional news coverage

News influencers

on social media who rely on other people's reporting to create content

Infotainment

late-night shows

News pundits & panels

cable news opinion shows, commentary podcasts, etc.

Individual users

posting or commenting on the day's headlines

Print
Social media
TV/Radio

Raw information

The raw materials of news include:



Observation



Data



Public records



Interviews with experts, officials, eyewitnesses



Raw video, audio and documents



Studies

The Information Ecosystem Depends on News

Today's information environment is complex, interconnected and constantly evolving — like an ecosystem. Much of this ecosystem depends on news reporting as a foundation for understanding current events. Let's take a closer look at the news-driven ecosystem and how high-quality journalism sustains it.

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INFORMATION WEB

The news-driven ecosystem is made up of different chains of information flows that form a web of connections. This web shows how information about current events flows through different parts of the ecosystem.



News gets to people via different platforms — like apps, TV, newspapers and social media — each of which shapes the coverage and our experience of it.

Content about news

A lot of what people casually refer to as “news” isn't actually news — it's content about news. People often get information about what's going on in the world from standards-based journalism, but they also sometimes learn about current events through sources that create content based on facts originally reported by journalists.

Journalism

! REMEMBER

- Different information sources have different purposes and play by different rules.
- Using “news” as a catch-all term can obscure big differences across the information ecosystem.
- Understanding these differences helps you stay informed and make up your own mind about current issues and events.

Original reporting happens at the roots, where journalists gather and make sense of raw information. Everything in the news-driven ecosystem relies on information verified at the roots of this tree through the practice of **journalism**. Doing this work takes A LOT of time and money — including journalists' salaries and the resources they need for reporting — often much more than simply commenting on the news.

Raw information

Raw information goes everywhere: It reaches the public directly over social media, gets commented on by influencers and is an important source for journalists.

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What makes an ecosystem healthy?

Healthy ecosystems are balanced and diverse. They also depend on the survival of keystone species.

When journalism disappears, the ecosystem suffers

In the information ecosystem, journalism is the keystone species, holding communities together by providing people with a shared set of facts. Losing this creates a ripple effect: Many other parts of the information ecosystem become less healthy or wither away entirely.

What would a healthy ecosystem look like?

- ✓ **Strong press freedoms** and protections for journalists.
- ✓ **Diverse news** and information sources.
- ✓ Fair access for everyone to **trustworthy information**.
- ✓ Public demand and financial support for **high-quality journalism**.
- ✓ **Respectful discussion** and disagreement based on **shared facts**.