# SPOTTING FAKE NEWS

"Fake news" is nothing new. Fabricated stories have been presented as truth for centuries
At least when we were getting our news via print publications or established news outlets, we had some degree of faith that the news was accurate.
Now add the internet and social media and misinformation is shared with a click, and the abundance of fake news sky rockets.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand what fake news is
- Identify the types of fake news
- Examine the consequences of using or sharing fake news
- Be familiar with techniques for evaluating the credibility of information sources
- Not going to get political or take sides

# WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?

"A LIE CAN GO AROUND THE WORLD WHILE THE TRUTH IS PUTTING ITS BOOTS ON."
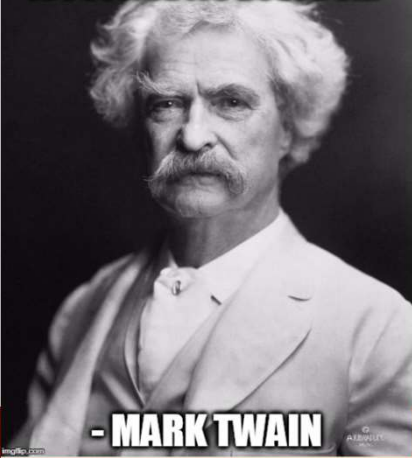
- MARK TWAIN

*"Made-up stuff, masterfully manipulated to look like credible journalistic reports that are easily spread online to large audiences willing to believe the fictions and spread the word."*

Source: Politifact

Key elements of "fake news"
- False made to look real
- Often sensational to grab your attention and entice you to share/spread it
- Often in online format that can be easily shared (web articles, social media)

Even this Mark Twain quote isn't credible. It's often attributed to Mark Twain, but it did not originate with him. Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon attributed it to an old proverb in a sermon he delivered in 1855. Even earlier, Jonathan Swift wrote something similar in 1710.

# TYPES OF FAKE/MISLEADING NEWS

- False/hoax news stories
- Misleading news
- Mimic websites
- Satire and parody
- Clickbait
- Alternative facts
- Viral emails & memes

NOT SURE IF TRUE

True

OR FALSE
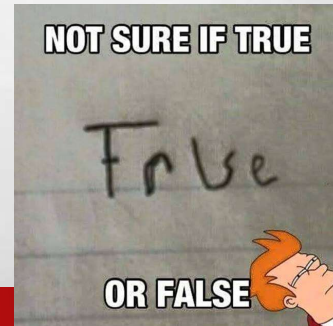
- False/hoax news stories – news that is fabricated with the intention of misleading or confusing readers
- Misleading news – news stories that report quotes, images, statistics out of context in order to mislead or confuse readers; some of these stories can be old stories that are re-reported with a new misleading headline
- Mimic websites – fake news websites that mimic the look of trusted news sources in order to fool readers into thinking a story is real
- Satire and parody – fake and ironic news stories that are intended to be funny or entertaining; ex: The Onion, The Borowitz Report
- Clickbait – news that is promoted with dramatic or misleading headlines that do not reflect the content of the actual story
- Alternative facts – a different interpretation of facts, usually derived from a misinterpretation of reports or studies, or by focusing only on a subset of the available information
- Viral emails & memes – sensationalized, satirical messages or graphics designed to be shared and spread quickly

# FAKE NEWS TAKES ALL FORMS

- Print, online, podcast, YouTube videos, radio shows, photos….any format that can convey information can convey *misinformation*

- Just because you saw it online or a family member shared it with you doesn't mean it's true.

- With widespread access to the Internet, ANYONE can create and disseminate information of any kind, easily and quickly.



OH YOU READ IT ON FACEBOOK IT MUST BE TRUE.

your ecards
someecards.com

# WHY IS FAKE NEWS HARMFUL?

- Many people believe fake news = confusion, misunderstanding

- Influence decision making on important issues

- Harmful to your health

- Students may receive lower grades or fail classes

Many Believe Fake News Articles
- Studies have shown that many Americans cannot tell what news is fake and what news is real. This can create confusion and misunderstanding about important social and political issues.

Fake News Can Be Harmful to Your Health
- There are many fake and misleading news stories related to medical treatments and major diseases. Trusting these false stories could lead you to make decisions that may be harmful to your health.
- Don't Google your symptoms and self-diagnose.

Fake News Can Affect Your Grades
- Teachers and professors require students to cite their information sources for research assignments and papers. If you use sources that have false or misleading information, you may get a lower grade.
- Wikipedia is not an appropriate source. It's an online encyclopedia, *written collaboratively by the people who use it. Anyone can contribute information to Wikipedia!*
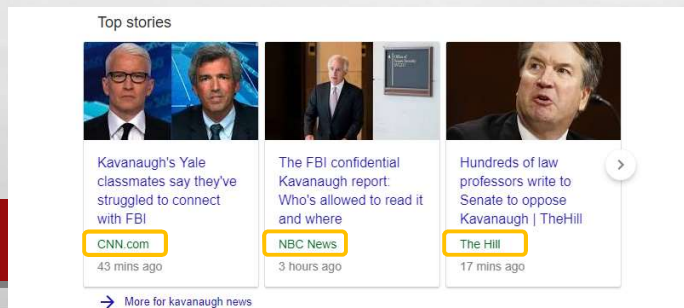
# HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

# CONSIDER THE SOURCE

- First thing….identify the source. Beware if you can't readily find the source.

- Investigate the source if you aren't familiar with them.
  - Look for an "About" or "About Us" page. What is the goal/mission of the source? Who are they?
  - Google the source with the work "fake" and see what results you get.

# CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Does the web address look right?

| Generally considered credible | Might be credible, might not |
|---|---|
| .gov      .edu      .mil      .org | .com      .net      .info |

- Avoid websites that end in **.com.co**  as they are often fake versions of real news sources.

    Fake news site: abcnews.com.co >>>>>

    Real news source: abcnews.go.com

*Anyone can register a domain or URL. This fake ABC News site was shutdown in 2017, but is a good example of how those wishing to manipulate the public will intentionally fabricate information.*

# CHECK THE AUTHOR

- Is the author named? If not, proceed with caution.
- Assess the author's credibility.
  - What can you find out about them?
  - What are their credentials/expertise?
  - What organization do they represent?

## CHECK THE AUTHOR

- Some news organizations allow "guest" contributors to post under the banner of their news brands. However, many of these posts do not go through the same editing process
- Examples: Buzzfeed, Forbes.com

Panos Mourdoukoutas
@PMourdoukoutas

Amazon Should Replace Local Libraries to Save Taxpayers Money via @forbes forbes.com/sites/panosmou...

1:00 PM - Jul 21, 2018

Amazon Should Replace Local Libraries to Save Taxpayers Money
The rise of Starbucks, Netflix, and Amazon have made local libraries irrelevant.
forbes.com

793   7,973 people are talking about this

Forbes.com example >> Recent opinion article on Forbes.com by an economics professor that argued libraries should be replaced by Amazon

- Author was incredibly misinformed; article loaded with incorrect information

- Librarians across the country got very vocal >> Forbes.com deleted the article

# READ BEYOND THE HEADLINE

- Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks.
- Is the headline sensationalized or does it match the information in the article? Is something taken out of context?
- Consider the article's content
  - What is the purpose of the article?
  - Is it fact-based or emotionally charged? Is the language loaded?
  - Is it actually an ad trying to sell you something? Or persuade you to make a particular decision?
  - Is it a news article or an opinion/editorial piece?

# SUPPORTING SOURCES

- Does the article cite or link to its sources? Follow the links in the article. Garbage usually leads to worse garbage.
- Are the sources partisan or biased? Do they have financial/ideological interest in persuading you?
- Is there supporting data? If so, how was it gathered?
  - Survey data is often unscientific.
  - Is the data being reported given in context or presented partially to support a particular result or perspective?
  - Do the researchers and institutions cited actually exist?
- Is there only one source reporting the news? Search other news outlets to see if the news is widely reported, then compare the reports across sources.

# CHECK THE DATE

- "Old news" is re-posted in order to reignite old passions but it may not be relevant to the time.

- "Old photos" may be used to help support current events…but be cautious.
  - Photos can be altered
  - Photos can be incorrectly attributed

*This 2011 photo taken by a Dallas Morning News reporter at the Frisco opening of In-N-Out Burger was used in 2018 to falsely report that Republicans were showing up in droves in opposition of the Democrats call to boycott the restaurant.*



Rebekah Worsham 🇺🇸
@RebekahWorsham
Follow

What happens when the left calls for boycott but America has had enough… 😂#InNOut now reporting RECORD business. Better retreat to your safe spaces, Dems. Things aren't looking good for you this fall. #RedWaveRising2018

7:16 AM - 1 Sep 2018

# IS IT A JOKE?

- Consider that the item might be satire.
- If it seems too outlandish, it might be satire or a parody.

Example: *The Stately Harold* unhelpfully identifies itself as a "satire" site in a manner that is deliberately difficult for readers to find, requiring them to highlight the solid black background of a page footer to disclose the site's "satire" tag:

© 2014 by The Stately Harold.

© 2014 by The Stately Harold. This is Satire!

# CHECK YOUR BIASES & REACTION

- Do you really <u>want</u> to believe (or not believe) what the article says? If so, you're at risk for bias.
    - Confirmation bias is the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting information that is consistent with one's existing beliefs. (Source: *Brittanica Library*, Encyclopedia Brittanica)
- Do you prefer reading partisan sources or do you look at multiple points of view?
- Which of your beliefs are facts and which are opinions? Many people don't ask themselves that question. Can your belief be empirically verified?
- What you can do:
    - Dig deeper, don't stop at the first thing you find.
    - Seek additional sources, alternative perspectives and viewpoints, then make an informed decision.
    - Gut check. If a story makes you feel strongly one way or another, it's probably designed that way.
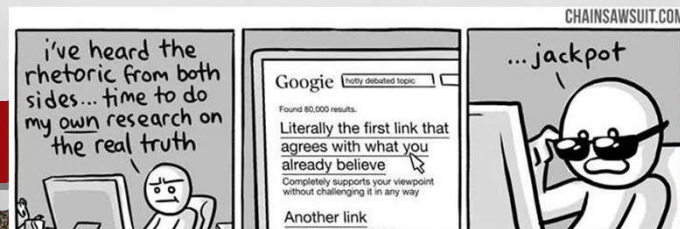
# OTHER THINGS TO LOOK FOR

- Bad web design
- All caps
- Numerous spelling/grammar errors
- Crazy amount of ads
- Obviously photoshopped pictures
- Excessive amount of banner ads or pop-ups

*If you're not sure an article or post is true, don't share it.*

# ONLINE RESOURCES

- Snopes.com – source for checking the credibility of urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation

- Politifact.com –  fact-checking website that rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials; run by editors and reporters from the Tampa Bay Times, an independent newspaper in Florida

- Punditfact.com – project of the Tampa Bay Times and The Poynter Institute, dedicated to checking the accuracy of claims by pundits, columnists, bloggers, political analysts, hosts/guests of talk shows, and other members of the media

- Factcheck.org – project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, a nonpartisan, nonprofit 'consumer advocate' for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics

- Hoax-slayer.com – debunks email and social media hoaxes, combats spam and internet scams

- TruthorFiction.com – get the truth about rumors, inspirational stories, virus warnings, hoaxes, scams, humorous tales, pleas for help, urban legends, prayer requests, calls to action, and other forwarded emails

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Bartlett, Bruce. *The Truth Matters: A Citizen's Guide to Separating Facts from Lies and Stopping Fake News in Its Tracks*. Ten Speed Press, 2017. [NEW SOC 070.905 BAR]

- Borel, Brooke. *The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

- Levitin, Daniel J. *Weaponized Lies: How to Think Critically in the Post-Truth Era*. Dutton, 2017.

- Center for Media Literacy  www.medialit.org

- National Association for Media Literacy Education  https://namle.net

- The News Literacy Project  https://newslit.org

- The Poynter Institute  www.poynter.org

- Facebook. Tips to Spot False News. https://www.facebook.com/help/188118808357379

- Ask a Librarian – we can help you evaluate information and find credible sources

BOOK A
LIBRARIAN
LEWISVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY