Combating Misinformation: Preserving Our Public Health and Our Civic Life

East-West Center
Fighting Disinformation on the Frontlines
Alan C. Miller, Founder and CEO, News Literacy Project
June 15, 2020
“One of the most urgent challenges of our times”

“The pandemic … brings into focus one of the most urgent challenges of our times. We (most of us) will survive the virus, but it is far from clear that democracies can survive the longer-term destabilization of objective truth.

If we want a world where major events can be discussed and debated on the basis of agreed and reliable facts, then we have no choice but to grapple with the epidemiology of misinformation.”

— Phillip Ball, Prospect, May 19, 2020
Misinformation and protests against racial injustice
Misinformation and the 2020 Election

“The Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion.”

Verified video
The Washington Post

Altered video
Politics Watch Dog/Facebook
The current landscape

190 million emails
19 million text messages
4.1 million Google queries
194,444 people tweeting
4.7 million YouTube videos viewed

Source: “2020: This Is What Happens In An Internet Minute,” Lori Lewis (Lori Lewis Media) and Chadd Callahan (Beasley XP)
## Motivations for misinformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To make money</th>
<th>To create mischief</th>
<th>To gain a partisan political advantage</th>
<th>To divide Americans and undermine trust in democracy</th>
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Why else do people spread misinformation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional reaction</th>
<th>Propagation goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Anger</td>
<td>• Self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curiosity</td>
<td>• Group interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hope</td>
<td>• Altruism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear</td>
<td>• Malice</td>
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Misinformation is much more than “fake news”

“Fake news”: A type of misinformation that has become politicized. Often applied to anything a person disagrees with, regardless of credibility.

Misinformation comes in many forms: Satire, false context, imposter content, manipulated content, fabricated content.

Regardless of form, all misinformation can confuse and overwhelm us as we search for credible information.
How misinformation spreads

Closed groups
How misinformation spreads

Closed groups

Social media
How misinformation spreads

Closed groups

Social media

Public figures

The News Literacy Project
How misinformation spreads

- Closed groups
- Social media
- Public figures
- Mainstream media
- Alternate media
Case Study: Buffalo Protest

Buffalo, NY June 4, 2020

SOURCE: WBFO/ Mike Desmond
Case Study: Buffalo Protest
Case Study: Buffalo Protest

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Buffalo protester shoved by Police could be an ANTIFA provocateur. 75 year old Martin Gugino was pushed away after appearing to scan police communications in order to black out the equipment. @OANN I watched, he fell harder than was pushed. Was aiming scanner. Could be a set up?

193K 8:34 AM - Jun 9, 2020

244K people are talking about this

Trump’s conspiracy theory on 75-year-old protester draws sharp backlash

The president’s tweet comes after a video of the encounter between Martin Gugino and two Buffalo police officers went viral online.

One America News, the Network That Spreads Conspiracies to the West Wing

President Trump amplified OANN’s false claim about Martin Gugino, 75, who was hospitalized after being shoved to the ground by the police.

The New York Times
The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories: A Growing Threat

Provide simple answer to a complex challenge

Legitimize fears and feelings

Create a sense of belonging (often “us” vs. “them”)

Identify a target to direct anger towards
Bad Actors

• **Trolls** deliberately post offensive, inflammatory, highly partisan content to provoke people.

• **Sockpuppets** are false online identities, often used to influence opinion about a person or organization with the intention of making it seem like the account is not affiliated in any way with that person or organization.

• **Bots** are “automated user accounts that interact with Twitter using an application programming interface (API).”
Challenge for Journalists: Decline in Ranks

- 1,800 newspapers closed since 2004
- 37% of counties with COVID-19 cases have lost newspapers
- 27,000 journalism jobs (23%) lost since 2008

Newsroom employment in the United States declined 23% between 2008 and 2019. Source: PEW Research, April 2020

Number of U.S. newsroom employees in news industries, in thousands

- '08: 114
- '09: 104
- '10: 99
- '11: 97
- '12: 96
- '13: 92
- '14: 90
- '15: 89
- '16: 88
- '17: 86
- '18: 88
- '19: 88
Linda Tirado

Hey folks, took a tracer found to the face (I think, given my backpack) and am headed into surgery to see if we can save my left eye.

Am wisely not gonna be on Twitter while I’m on morphine.

Stay safe folks.

Maria Ressa

Maria Ressa found guilty in blow to Philippines' press freedom

Ressa, who runs Rappler, sentenced to at least six months in jail for 'cyber libel', will appeal controversial ruling.

by Ted Regencia
9 hours ago
In the Eye of the Beholder:
Filter Bubbles, Confirmation Bias and Algorithms

“The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.”

— Robertson Davies

Photo source: Eli Pariser, 2012
Seeing News Through Prisms of Red and Blue
The Misinformation Threat

59% of Americans say it is hard to identify false information — intentionally misleading and inaccurate stories portrayed as truth — on social media.

63% of people worldwide agree that the average person can’t tell good journalism from rumors or falsehoods.

Sources (from left): NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll (January 2020); 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer
Breaking News: Consumer Beware!

Survivors of High School Massacre Speak Out

David Hogg | Student who survived massacre
The Pandemic: A Perfect Storm

- **Emotions:** Fear/Anxiety / Anger
- **Lockdown and isolation:** social media
- **High-stakes, long-running event**
- **Unkowns and Uncertainty**
- **Nexus of conspiracy theories and groups**
The “Infodemic:” From the Source to the Scale

Misinformation About Origins

Misinformation About Prevention & Treatment
Misinformation About Origins

Nation

PROOF: The "Novel Coronavirus" Infecting the World is a MILITARY BIO-WEAPON Developed by China's Army

Bill Gates has made $$$ creating computer Viruses and Anti-Virus Software! Now Makes Virus's for Humans then sells Meds! Guess Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation & Others Predicted Up To 65 Million Deaths Via Coronavirus – In Simulation Ran 3 Months Ago!

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation & Others Predicted Up To ...
Foundation also funded group who owns virus patent and is funding research for a vaccine to stop it from spreading

11:48 AM · Jan 27, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

133 Retweets 72 Likes
Misinformation About Prevention & Treatment
Scout @scherer_conrad · Apr 5

Apparently they're all waiting for "the rush" of sick people. Stay tuned!

#FilmYourHospital
**Pandemic**

- Thrives on unsuspecting people
- Moves across borders
- Overwhelming medical infrastructure
- 20 seconds goes a long way
- Stop the spread (social distancing)
- Flatten the curve (your choices affect others)
- No vaccine yet available

**“Infodemic”**

- Thrives on unsuspecting people
- Moves across platforms/mediums
- Overwhelming information infrastructure
- 20 seconds goes a long way
- Stop the spread (detect, debunk and correct)
- Flatten the curve (your choices affect others)
- Vaccine available!
Saving Democracy
About the News Literacy Project
The News Literacy Project: Giving Facts a Fighting Chance

Our Mission

The News Literacy Project, a nonpartisan national education nonprofit, empowers educators to teach students the skills they need to be smart, active consumers of news and other information and engaged, informed participants in civic life. It also provides people of all ages with tools and resources that enable them to identify credible information and know what to trust, share and act on.

Our Vision

News literacy is embedded in the American education experience. Both students and the public know how to identify credible news and other information, enabling them to take an active role in the civic life of their communities and the country.
Our Resources and Programs

- **checkology®**
  - E-learning platform used in classrooms

- **The Sift®**
  - Real-time teachable moments

- **NewsLitCamp®**

- **Website posts and #NewsLitTips**

- **Informable mobile app**

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The News Literacy Project
Checkology's 13 Lessons

- **InfoZones**
  Host: Tracie Potts NBC News Channel

- **Democracy's Watchdog**
  Host: Wesley Lowery
  60 in 6 Draft

- **Misinformation**
  Host: Claire Wardle First Draft

- **Practicing Quality Journalism**
  Host: Enrique Acevedo Univision

- **Understanding Bias**
  Host: Indira Lakshmanan
  National Geographic

- **What is News?**
  Host: Paul Saltzman
  the Chicago Sun-Times

- **Be the Editor**
  Self-guided interactive lesson

- **The First Amendment**
  Host: Sam Chaltain
  First Amendment expert

- **Citizen Watchdogs**
  Host: Tamerra Griffin
  BuzzFeed News

- **Press Freedoms Around the World**
  Host: Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson

- **Introduction to Algorithms**
  Host: Nicco Mele
  Harvard Kennedy School

- **Branded Content**
  Host: Emily Withrow
  the Quartz Bot Studio

- **Arguments & Evidence**
  Host: Kimberley Strassel
  The Wall Street Journal
Reach of NLP Resources

The Sift®
17,000+
subscribers
informable
14,500+
app downloads

checkology®
Since May 2016
More than 161,000
student users in
116 countries
and all 50 states

24,000+
educators registered

NewsLitCamp®
21 hosted in
10 states
with
177
journalists
and
1,271
educators

The News Literacy Project
Misinformation: A Global Pandemic

The growing contagion of online misinformation should serve as a national wake-up call.

We need a new ethos of personal responsibility about the news and other information that we trust — and share.
Combating Misinformation: Seeking a new ethos of personal responsibility
Practice news literacy skills

- Check your sources before you share
- Be mindful of what you share
- Push back against misinformation

Stand up for facts!
Keep up with news literacy topics

Follow us on social media and share

Facebook: /TheNewsLiteracyProject
Twitter: @NewsLitProject
Instagram: @NewsLitProject
LinkedIn: LinkedIn.com/company/the-news-literacy-project
Individual Sources for debunking misinformation

Note: All logos are hyperlinked.
A sample of reputable fact-checking organizations

Note: All logos are hyperlinked.
INTERNATIONAL FACT-CHECKING NETWORK @ Poynter.
Short history of IFCN’s Code of Principles

- Launched in September 15, 2016. Signed up by 35 organizations from 27 countries
- Facebook announced it will rely on IFCN’s Code of Principles for Third Party Fact Checking Program in December 2016
-Introduced a new system of independent external assessors reviewing adherence to the code in January 2017
- Launched the application portal in 2018 to streamline the process
- Reached to 60+ organizations from 40 countries in January 2019
- Reached to 89 organizations from 48 countries in April 2020
International distribution of fact-checking organizations

210
fact-checking projects

68
countries

Duke Reporters’ Lab, October 2019
IFCN’s verified signatories

92 countries
The Commitments of the Code of Principles

- Eligibility to be a signatory
- A commitment to Non-partisanship and Fairness
- A commitment to Standards and Transparency of Sources
- A commitment to Transparency of Funding & Organization
- A commitment to Standards and Transparency of Methodology
- A commitment to an Open & Honest Corrections Policy
IFCN and the pandemic

- Launched #CoronavirusFacts Alliance in January 2020
- Introduced database of 6,000+ Covid-19 falsehoods and the first ever global fact-checking chatbot on WhatsApp
- Generated $3,2m since the WHO called the misinformation problem as ‘infodemic’

Fighting the Infodemic: The #CoronaVirusFacts Alliance

Led by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) at the Poynter Institute, the #CoronaVirusFacts / #DatosCoronaVirus Alliance unites more than 100 fact-checkers around the world in publishing, sharing and translating facts surrounding the new coronavirus. The Alliance was launched in January when the spread of the virus was restricted to China but already causing rampant misinformation globally. The World Health Organization now classifies this issue as an infodemic — and the Alliance is on the front lines in the fight against it.

This map illustrates the volume of fact-checks in the global database today. It reflects the number of fact-checks we have published from our contributors across the world. It is not an indication of the volume of misinformation seen or shared in each country. Please use the filters to refine your view.
Fact-checking at Internet Scale

- Surfacing authoritative fact checks on Google Search and News
  - Fact checks appear more than 11 million times a day in search and news (Brazil, India, France, UK, US)
  - 4 billion impressions a year

- ClaimReview & Media Review
  - Building a depository of fact checks
  - Google Fact Check Explorer
  - Automation & Surfacing authoritative sources

- FactTrack
  - Depository of trusted & reliable sources

- Third-Party Fact-Checking Program at Facebook
  - 7,500 fact checks labeling 50 million pieces of content related to COVID-19 (April)
Automated fact-checking on your smart phones

- **Chatbot on WhatsApp**
  - Depository of 6,000+ fact checks
  - Directory for fact-checkers
  - Currently in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Hindi are coming soon!

[http://poy.nu/ifcnbot](http://poy.nu/ifcnbot)
Resources for the application & assessment process

- The commitments of the code of principles
  - poy.nu/code

- Guidelines for applicants
  - poy.nu/applicants

- Guidelines for assessors
  - poy.nu/assessors

- Checklist for applicants & assessors
  - poy.nu/checklistcop

- Application for Code of Principles
  - poyn.nu/apply

- Complaints policy and form for violations
  - poy.nu/complaints
Infodemic at the time of Pandemic

Harry Sufehmi, MSc
MAFINDO
About MAFINDO

- A grassroots community started as a Facebook forum on 2015 at https://facebook.com/groups/FAFHH/, now 80,000+ members strong

- Institutionalized as MAFINDO on November 2016

- Now there are 17 chapters in various cities all over Indonesia

- Powered by the spirit of “gotong royong”, a culture of collaboration.

- Rallied all members of society to combat hoaxes: while we confront hoaxes & educate the public, The Government rose to the challenge, developing the massive Siberkreasi community all over Indonesia, organizing huge events and festivals, and so on. The Police scaled up their Cybercrime division significantly in a very short time. Many academics got involved into researching this issue. Companies are lending their support as well. And media are eagerly jumping on the issue, raising awareness on the public.
Our Achievements so far

● Successfully promoted the term “hoax” to represent the whole spectrum of mis/disinformation. Making it much easier to raise awareness & educate the public.

● HCC (Hoax Crisis Center) set up by MAFINDO credited by IPAC as the leader of peace keeping efforts during Local election. Potential riots were successfully averted.

● And according to Pressland, our 2019 Presidential Election was saved from the hoax propaganda.

○ And then came the Pandemic
Rise of the COVID-19 Hoaxes

(source: Mafindo)
COVID-19 Hoaxes: Topics

- Politics
- Religion
- Ethnic/Race
- Health Related Issue
- Disaster
- Other
What can we do?

1. Pre-Bunking
2. Detection
3. Debunking
4. Counter
**Pre-bunking**

1. Dissemination of the facts

2. Giving effect of “infodemic vaccination”, making society more resistant to hoaxes.

3. Example: [https://www.covid19.go.id](https://www.covid19.go.id)
Detection

1. MAFINDO counts on public reports, via :
   a. Facebook Forum: https://facebook.com/groups/fafhh
   b. Website: https://turnbackhoax.id/lapor-hoax/

2. And other channels
Debunking

1. Crowdsourcing: 80,000+ anggota FAFHH
2. Hoax Buster teams in 3 cities
3. Volunteers
Counter

1. Social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Website, etc

2. CekFakta alliance: collaboration of 24 online media to combat hoaxes, the platform developed & supported by Mafindo

3. Partners: National TV & Radio, Government’s “Siberkreasi” community, other related NGOs, grassroots communities, academics, etc

4. Researches: to enable better response, in collaboration with WHO, CDC, and Unicef.
The gory details: our programmes

- Crowdsourced Fact-checking
- Public literacy education
- Public digital-literacy education
- Public campaign
- Government advocacy
- Media campaign & advocacy
- Multi-channels counter propaganda
- Anti-hoax education materials
- Anti-hoax technologies

- Research on Literacy & Digital literacy
- Academic Research on Misinformation
- International collaborations
- Training & Workshops
- Training for Trainers
- Training for Journalists
- Public forum speakers
- Social media advocacy
- And many more
Thank You
Third-Party Fact-Checking at Facebook

MAY 2020
Today’s Agenda

1. How News Feed works
2. Integrity at Facebook
3. Third Party Fact Checking Program
4. Fighting misinformation during COVID-19
HOW NEWS FEED WORKS
INVENTORY
Stories posted by friends and Pages

SIGNALS
Who posted the story?
When was it posted?

PREDICTIONS
How likely are you to comment?

SCORE
Calculate a relevance score
News Feed Ranking
Integrity at Facebook
Improving News Feed

Remove

Reduce

Inform
Improving News Feed

Remove
Reduce
Inform
facebook
Community Standards

Helping to keep you safe

Encouraging respectful behavior

Keeping your information secure

Protecting your intellectual property
Misinformation designed to deter or prevent people from voting

Misinformation that incites imminent, offline harm
Improving News Feed

- Remove
- Reduce
- Inform
Third Party Fact-Checking on Facebook
Facebook works with more than 60 fact-checking partners in 50 languages globally to identify, review & rate viral misinformation on our platform.
Identify potential false news using various signals

Review the accuracy of stories

Act by showing false news lower in News Feed
How We Detect Misinformation

Feedback from community

Disbelief comments

Machine Learning
Enforceable Fact-Checking Ratings

False
The primary claim(s) of the content are factually inaccurate.

Partly False
The claim(s) of the content are a mix of accurate and inaccurate, or the primary claim is misleading or incomplete.

False Headline
The primary claim(s) of the article body content are true, but the primary claim within the headline is factually inaccurate.
The Focus of Our Program

• The focus of Facebook's fact-checking program is identifying and addressing viral misinformation — provably false claims that can mislead or harm users, in addition to financially motivated misinformation.

• It is not meant to police speech, interfere in political debates, or address minor inaccuracies in reporting.

• We are particularly concerned with the type of misinformation that spreads uniquely on social platforms (e.g. memes, out-of-context images).
Impact on Story

- **Story Demoted**
- **Sharing Interstitial**
- **User Notifications**
- **Related Articles**
Introducing More Visual Labels for Misinformation
Impact on Story

False News Story Views Over Time

80% Reduction

False Rating

TIME

VIEWS
Impact on Page or Domain

PAGE OR DOMAIN DEMOTION

False Rating on Content Shared by [Page]

[Page Name] shared content that’s been reviewed by Associated Press. See how fact-checking works on Facebook. Learn More

Headline making false claim about aliens making contact
Fake News Site

ADDITIONAL REPORTING

Associated Press  Fact-Checker
Headline disputing false article about aliens

To fight false news, Facebook reduces the distribution of misleading content while also providing additional reporting around each marked story.

Pages and websites that publish or share false news will see their overall distribution reduced and their ability to monetize and advertise removed.

PUBLISHER NOTIFICATIONS

Content shared by [Page Name] rated as [RATING] by a third-party fact-checker.

Chelsea Wang posted in Jonathan Richman at Swedish American Hall.

Moon Glyph shared a link: “Hey Meadows releases a gorgeous vib...”

Clarissa Change, Mary-Anne Cooper and 3 other people replied to your comment in Coffee Club.

Connie Chung Chang and Stanford Liew have birthdays today.

Secret Cinema got more new likes this week. Keep up the good work!

REMOVE AD + MONETIZATION RIGHTS

(Icon of crossed-out dollar sign)
Labelling Misinformation on Instagram

FEED

BOTTOMSHEET

STORIES
Fighting misinformation during COVID-19
50M posts displayed warnings in relation to COVID-19 misinformation in April

95% of people did not go on to view the content, once they saw the warning
• Facebook COVID-19 Information Centre

• WhatsApp and Messenger Partnerships with governments

• Quick promotions and search resources on Facebook and Instagram

• Training sessions with local governments and emergency health organizations
• Provided $1M to IFCN to distribute grants to fact-checking organizations to amplify their editorial work around COVID-19.

• Worked with WhatsApp to launch a new collaboration with IFCN supported by a $1 million grant

• Provided at least $5K in ad credits to 100% of our 3PFC partners to go toward boosting COVID-19 related fact-checks

• Showed messages in News Feed to people who have liked, reacted or commented on harmful misinformation about COVID-19 that we have since removed. These messages connected people to COVID-19 myths debunked by the WHO.
Questions
Thank You