NEWSCo/Lab COOKBOOK

Best practices in transparency, engagement, education and tools
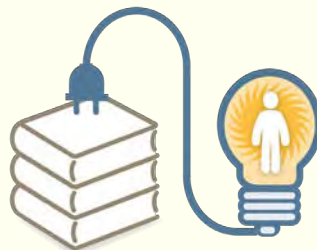
ASU News Co/Lab
Arizona State University

BETA

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Media transparency and engagement are buzzwords in journalism today, and rightfully so. With public trust in the media at an all-time low and public officials promoting a "media as the enemy of the people" narrative, the industry is long overdue for a course correction when it comes to creating journalism that is for the people.

Fortunately, a lot of excellent work is already going on in the arenas of transparency and engagement, as well as in media and news literacy education. One of the News Co/Lab's goals as a collaborative lab is to highlight the best of what is out there by making it relevant and doable for others. With our best practices project, we have focused on proven practices that improve news and, at the same time, help the public better understand how news works.

We designed the best practices with ease-of-use and replicability in mind. We kept each profile brief to be more digestible for busy newsroom leaders, and we have only profiled projects that have clear evidence of success. Best practices are not a one size fits all, so we have featured projects both big and small, those that can be implemented fairly simply with existing resources and those that require heavier lifting. The collection has something for newsrooms of all sizes and formats, and we encourage journalists to consider combining and refining the "recipes" in this cookbook to best fit their needs.

The News Co/Lab believes in innovation that is community-centered, sustainable and scalable. We hope the best practices cookbook offers inspiration to help move newsrooms to implement broader transparency and engagement efforts in their everyday work.

**by Kristy Roschke
News Co/Lab Managing Director**

Newsroom change leader [Michele McLellan](#) headed up the [News Co/Lab's](#) reporting on [Best Practices](#). In a series of blog posts, she discusses how newsrooms can begin to meet the challenges of the digital media environment and help their audiences become more news aware.

by Michele McLellan

Transparency's New Role

"Today's environment has challenged our business in so many ways. Now it will require us to develop a new relationship with the public. That's all we needed. One more challenge. But it is one more challenge we will have to meet." –– **Martin Baron, Editor, The Washington Post**

We all face challenges in life and currently, journalism itself is facing its biggest challenge – improving the relationship between the those in the field and the general public. But journalists are not alone in this; the public is also reevaluating their relationship with media and need to become conscious media users. Many say it is [becoming harder to stay informed](#). When it comes to traditional media, [public trust has fallen](#), though local news is trusted more than national, and media is trusted more than social media. One in five Americans are [“eager and willing” to improve](#) their online literacy skills.

Most importantly, news and information providers need to be more open and transparent in order for any positive change to happen. Research shows that [news consumers find information more trustworthy](#) when they know something about the source. News providers and journalists can put this into practice through [improving sourcing in an open and honest way,](#) [showing their work](#) and [reaching out to the public for help in reporting](#). In addition, [The Trust Project](#), a consortium of news organizations and tech platforms, has a list of eight "[core indicators](#)" to gauge the credibility of an organization's journalism.

Transparency is now a fundamental part of the work journalists do everyday. It is essential in a world where the distribution of information becomes more atomized and journalism is separated from the organization that produced it.

Engagement With Communities is Vital

In order to provide the news that is important to the communities we serve, we have to find out what information they are looking for. Enter engagement, the art of conversation, of listening before talking. It's just as essential as the act of being open; in some ways, transparency and engagement are two sides of the same coin. More newsrooms are recognizing engagement as a vital component of a successful newsroom. Lenfest Institute, a nonprofit that is developing new models for sustaining journalism, launched the Community Listening and Engagement Fund to subsidize newsroom experiments with [Hearken](#) and [GroundSource](#). Making an effort to understand the community can be as simple as asking community members to "[join the beat](#)," or increasing diversity in newsrooms. Our best practices are leading the charge with ideas to increase engagement such as [bringing viewers with questions along the way as journalists verify](#)

information, joining opposing community groups in conversation, or simply asking for readers' feedback. Doing more to put these into practice will help journalists differentiate themselves from the distrusted stereotype, "the media."

"If journalism is to thrive, it must pair trustworthy facts with trust-building practices," said Molly de Aguiar, managing director of the News Integrity Initiative. "This means moving beyond the often extractive 'community engagement' practices and toward 'community collaboration' that helps create more inclusive and relevant stories that reflect the information needs of the community."

Understanding, conversation, engagement, collaboration — these all are two-way streets. In the end, newsrooms hoping to help their communities understand news won't succeed unless they really understand their communities.

Education: Fact or Fiction?

Every day, people on social media like and share information that is either flat-out false or so highly distorted it thoroughly tramples truth. Partisan disruptors, trolls and bots are behind a lot of the disinformation that circulates online. But an often unwitting public is helping.

Efforts to educate the public on how to distinguish fact from fiction needs to outpace the scale of disinformation coming through social media, which often appeals to emotion and is not rooted in fact. During the final months of the 2016 presidential campaign, stories alleging events that never happened outperformed legitimate news stories on Facebook in terms of shares, comments and likes. Bots, or automated accounts, accelerate and widen the spread of misinformation.

Researchers found that accounts that frequently tweeted links to false stories are more likely to be bots than humans on Twitter. However, humans often retweeted the fake stories. Many people share stories on social media without actually reading them. A massive study found that nearly six in 10 links shared on social media had never been clicked. One particularly troubling study of 7,800 middle, high school and college students found most of the students were taken in by the false information with "stunning and dismaying consistency."

These pressing issues, and more, are why Dan Gillmor, co-founder of the News Co/Lab, says, "We, the people who use media mostly as consumers and sharers, have to upgrade ourselves too." Organizations like the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University and The News Literacy Project noticed the potential for this problem in the past and have worked for years to perfect news literacy programs. Both organizations have transitioned these courses to an online format with Making Sense of the News: News Literacy Lessons for Digital Citizens and Checkology, which are also part of our best practices. Education is an effective way to create necessary change and the News Literacy Project has already found that nine in 10 students in its university classes said they were able to better collect, use and produce credible information as a result of their program. Meanwhile, the Center for News Literacy found that their course showed, among other things, that students had "significantly higher levels of news media literacy, greater knowledge of current events, and higher motivation to consume news, compared with students who had not taken the course."

News literacy education is a pressing issue as far as the state level with educators and legislators implementing new programs and in a smaller scale with librarians at The American

Library Association. Educational programs are vital, according to the lead author of the Stanford study of students' ability to sort fact from fiction. Education is "the only way we can deal with these kinds of issues," Sam Wineburg said. "The ability to determine what is reliable or not reliable is the new basic skill in our society."

Tools and Techniques to Win the War For Facts

Changing the complex news and information crisis is dependent on those of us who care about the facts. The crisis is "a tangled knot that is changing and creating new knots all the time," says Heather Chaplin, director of the Journalism + Design program at the New School. Chaplin cites "massive technical disruption, fraying trust, collapsed mainstream media business models, fractured audiences, rising propaganda machines, a White House bent on discrediting the whole enterprise" as factors, entangled further with societal shifts and political polarization.

We see more joining the fight, but still have a limited number of far-reaching and long-lasting solutions. Social media giants Google and Facebook, today the dominant distributors of news and information, are waking up to the need to do better. Recent efforts from Facebook to limit political advertising, incorrectly targeted political journalism, lumping it in with the ads, but the company soon announced it will be making changes to it in the future. Facebook revealed their primary tools to fight misinformation use human intervention and machine learning. Technology can create a sticky situation; even Google faced some backlash after it announced that it was testing Bulletin, an app with which anyone will be able to post local news, raising questions about the potential for even more misinformation.

Both companies are working with the Trust Project, which is partnering with news organizations to implement "Trust Indicators" such as transparency about policies and practices. The platforms will be able to detect that the indicators are in place and will raise the profile of news from these organizations. That said, no major tech firm has come to grips with the newest form of viral deception: fake audio and video.

At the end of the day, upgrading the technology doesn't matter unless people, through education, also are upgraded. Without more savvy on the "demand side," credible news seems unlikely to beat the fierce competition from disinformation spread across social platforms by armies of bots, fakers and their unwitting minions.

News and media literacy has long been primarily the province of educators, but as the crisis deepens, journalists and other media makers can help scale news literacy education by embedding it in their transparency and engagement practices.

Dan Gillmor, co-founder of News Co/Lab believes the crisis of misinformation presents journalists with an "extraordinary opportunity" to act and to strengthen their bonds with communities whose support they need to survive. He says the collapse of trust in media means journalists, alongside educators in schools and libraries and others who make media, have to recognize their significant stake in the future of the public's understanding of journalism and act to raise that understanding.

"They won't just be doing better by their communities. They'll also boost their own standing at a time when the general public has so little trust in the craft."

Scroll through the following pages for a look at all the best practices we have reported on to date.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ **Engagement**

Ask Me Anything

■ WHAT IS IT?

The Day invited questions and feedback from its community during a series of "Ask Me Anything" sessions on Facebook. Readers asked The Day staff about coverage decisions, comments policies and other editorial processes — and received detailed responses within minutes. "It's amazing what happens when you ask readers for feedback, then show up and listen," Trusting News director Joy Mayer wrote on Twitter. (The Day is a Trusting News participant.)
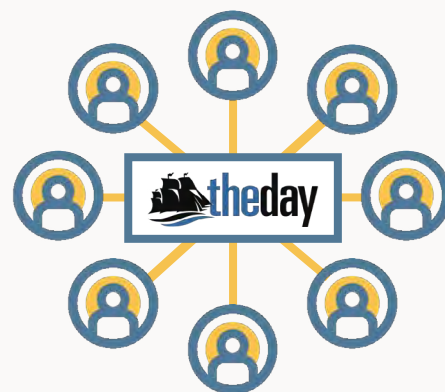
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Day's "Ask Me" sessions featured a rotating cast of reporters and editors. They included digital news director Carlos Virgen, director of multimedia Peter Huoppi and reporters Erica Moser, Martha Shanahan and Lindsay Boyle. The Day is a heralded legacy newspaper in Connecticut that reaches about 100,000 readers in print and receives more than three million monthly page views. In 2017, The Day received New England Newspaper of the Year honors, making it eight out of the last ten years.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Early clues: The Day's first general session and a later one on user comments generated more than 25 question-and-answer threads. Sessions focused on photography and the news pages sparked less engagement. Elsewhere, the format has been catching on at news outlets such as the Washington Post, which hosted several Ask Me Anything sessions in 2017 on Reddit.
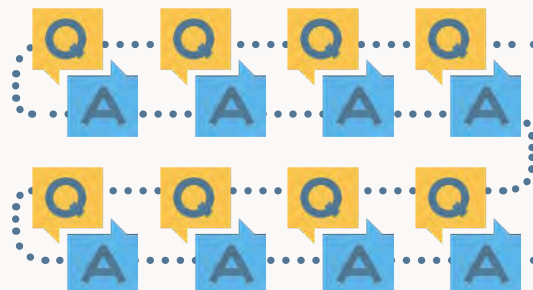
■ HOW TO DO IT

The Day announced the series on its website and invited readers to submit questions in advance. The live chats on Facebook took place at noon on Mondays and ran for about an hour. Participating staff members responded to every question and suggestion (including the loaded ones), provided thoughtful explanations of their work and processes, and even acknowledged mistakes. Each session ended with a comment inviting further questions and linking out to The Day's Trusting News page.

NEWSCo/Lab
Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ **Engagement**

Conversation & Coffee

■ **WHAT IS IT?**

Honolulu Civil Beat invites readers and donors into its newsroom each month for a coffee-and-discussion event with editors and reporters, including general manager Patti Epler. People ask questions; Civil Beat explains how it reports news. "It's all about creating a more organic, grounded relationship with our readers," director of philanthropy Ben Nishimoto said. "If we're going to demand accountability and transparency from government and those we cover, then we have an obligation to be accountable and transparent as well."

■ **WHO'S BEHIND IT?**

Launched in 2010 as a commercial news site, Civil Beat transitioned six years later to a nonprofit, member-supported model. In 2017, Civil Beat was named the best overall news site in Hawaii for a seventh straight year. The morning coffee series — an idea that Civil Beat picked up from Voice of San Diego — is run by membership and events manager Mariko Chang.

■ **DOES IT WORK?**

Conversation & Coffee's reach is small (averaging about 35 guests). But Chang says the program has been valuable. At one event, a guest shared that she felt inundated by news online and was struggling to teach her kids how to identify reliable sources; in response, Civil Beat partnered with the Hawaii State Public Library System to launch a series of news literacy events, including one in May 2017 on information overload.

■ **HOW TO DO IT**

Civil Beat arranges a circle of chairs in the newsroom and provides coffee, tea, and pastries. Epler shares an update and asks for feedback on the site's coverage. She then invites questions from the group. An hour-long conversation flows freely. Civil Beat editors sit on the perimeter of the circle, and stay afterwards for one-on-one chats. Civil Beat also takes its show on the road, hosting events at coffee shops around the state.

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Talk Without Toxicity

■ WHAT IS IT?

Talk by The Coral Project is a new type of free, open-source commenting platform. It helps newsrooms hold commenters to the rules and spotlight their best work. With Talk, community guidelines are front and center — directly above the comment box. The featured comments pane rewards quality contributions. Talk includes an optional plug-in, Toxic Comments, which warns users when the comment they want to post may violate the rules, giving them a chance to revise.
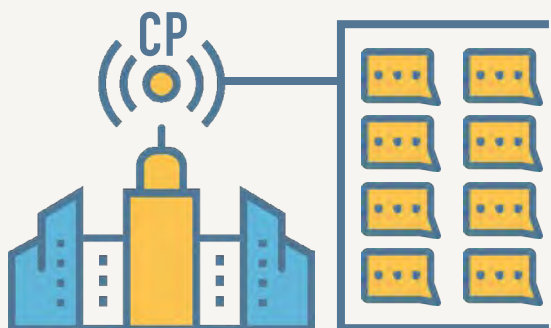

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Coral Project launched in 2015 as a collaboration between the Mozilla Foundation, the New York Times and Washington Post. The project was funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and spearheaded by Andrew Losowsky. In 2017, The Coral Project deployed Talk in ten newsrooms, including the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and The Intercept. It also announced four new funders—the News Integrity Initiative, the Rita Allen Foundation, Democracy Fund and Mozilla itself.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Many of Talk's features are based on academic research, including a 2016 study that found that putting the rules up front works. Talk's project lead says that while they don't yet have definitive data, anecdotal evidence is so far positive. For example, Argentina's Página12 framed the responses not as comments but as 'contributions,' " Losowsky writes. "The result is a respectful dialog among readers and journalists, in a way that honors the ideas and efforts of both."
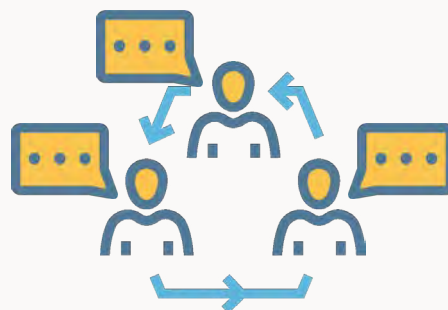

■ HOW TO DO IT

News organizations can deploy The Coral Project's open-source tools (the other tool is Ask) independently and for free at any time. Most outlets work with Coral's team to customize their strategy and deployment for a smoother launch, and to partner on hosted versions of the tools. The Coral Project's guides, which offer "instructions and ideas" for smarter engagement, including moderating effectively, managing rogue commenters, and protecting your organization from malware.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶**Engagement**

Verify Road Trip

■ WHAT IS IT?

Verify Road Trip is a Dallas television program that asks community members to submit questions, then takes one of them on a video adventure in search of answers. The weekly segment shows how information is verified using good journalism practices. Topics can be serious (reporting on a proposed border wall accompanied by a Trump supporter) or light (asking whether barbeque or chili should be the Texas state food).
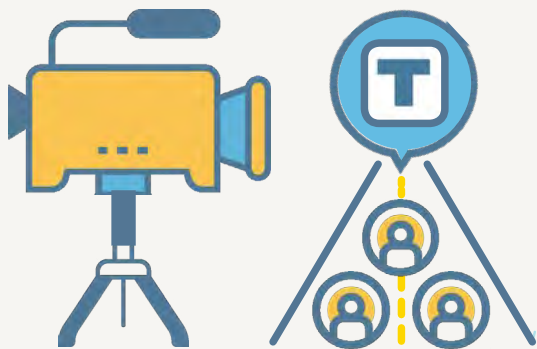
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

WFAA, an ABC affiliate and Tegna station in Dallas, pioneered this approach starting in 2015. Verify Road Trip falls under the umbrella of Verify, a fact-checking initiative that was a brainchild of an Innovation Summit organized by Tegna, which has television stations in 38 markets. Tegna stations in other markets also broadcast WFAA's Verify Road Trip segments and operate their own fact checking projects based on viewer queries.

■ DOES IT WORK?

David Schechter, WFAA senior reporter and the host of Verify Road Trip, said a segment on how hormones in milk do not cause early puberty in girls drew 1.2 million views. The segment's Facebook page grew from 2,000 followers to 22,000 in one year. Schechter says the question-askers all report learning about newsgathering. Tegna VP of news Ellen Crooke said Verify segments had attracted 5.8 million page views as of June.
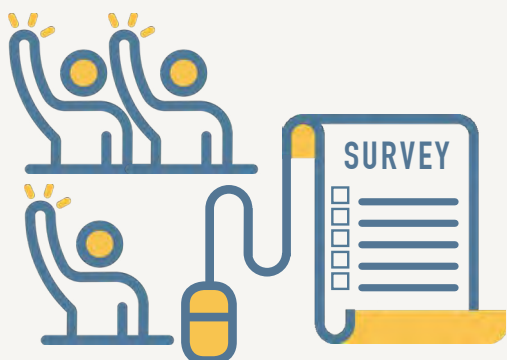

■ HOW TO DO IT

Set up a Facebook page to gather questions. Once you pick a question, ask for volunteers to appear on camera. A short survey about interest and motivation can help you choose a guest. Staffing models may vary, but Verify Road Trip host David Schechter and photographer Chance Horner work full-time on the segment. Finding high-caliber experts is critical. Scheduling reporter, expert and volunteer can be challenging. More on the process here.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ Engagement

Verify, verify, verify

■ WHAT IS IT?

Verify is community-driven fact-checking. Local television viewers submit assertions they see on social media. Stations look into the claims and air short segments with verified facts. KHOU in Houston, for example, looked at the post "Is the "secret sisters gift exchange" a scam?" (it was). Verify also posts relevant source information and documents online with the videos.
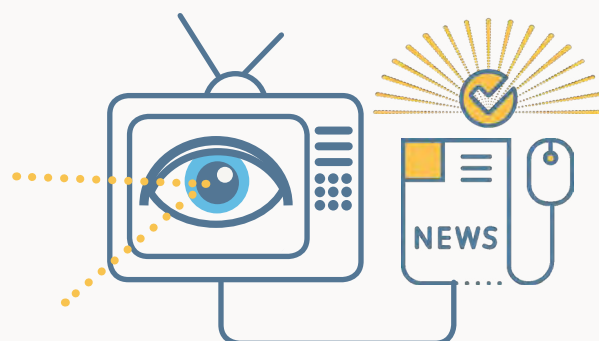
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Tegna launched Verify in 2017 at its television stations in 38 markets. KHOU in Houston piloted the practice, which was a brainchild of a Tegna Innovation Summit and one of a number of initiatives the chain has developed to help its journalism stand out in local markets. Another popular Verify program, Verify Roadshow, takes a question-asker along to help report the answers.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Tegna Vice President of News Ellen Crooke said Verify segments are proving popular; they attracted 5.8 million page views across the group during the launch period. Viewers are engaged; KHOU in Houston receives roughly 50 Verify requests each week.

5.8 MILLION PAGE VIEWS

VERIFY VERIFY VERIFY VERIFY VERIFY
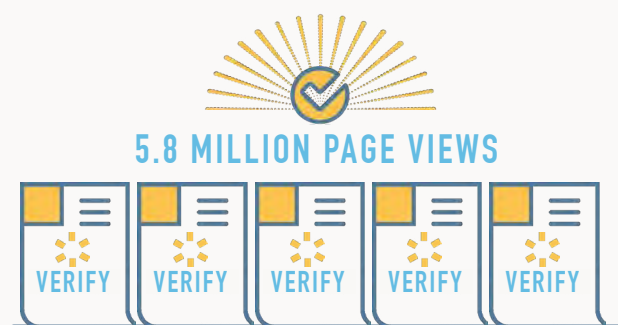
■ HOW TO DO IT

KHOU solicits viewer queries on social media (#KHOUVerify on Twitter, KHOU 11 News on Facebook) and via email. KHOU News Director Sally Ramirez said researchers help, but everyone in the newsroom is involved in fact-checking. The segments, which appear two or three times a week, typically run 1 to 3 minutes and are posted online with the sources. Find more details on the process here.

NEWSCo/Lab
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Building news savvy: Best practices

▶Engagement

A 'Contributions' Section

■ WHAT IS IT?

De Correspondent's "contributions" section is like a comments section with guard rails and a how-to guide. Featured beneath all stories on the site, the contributions section explicitly invites readers to share their "experience and knowledge" — instead of their opinions. "This may seem like a minor detail," publisher Ernst-Jan Pfauth wrote, "but the first step to great reader contributions is an articulation of your expectations."
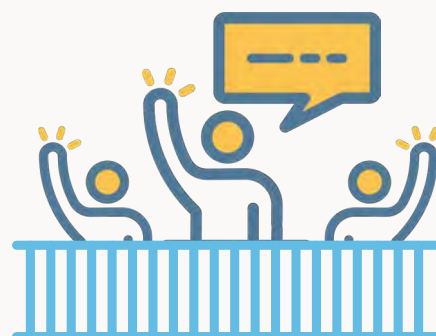
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

De Correspondent is a Dutch news startup that launched in 2013 after crowdfunding $1.7 million, making it at the time the most successful journalism crowdfunding campaign in history. The company now has more than 50,000 paying members in the Netherlands and is working with New York University professor Jay Rosen and the Membership Puzzle Project on plans to to launch an English-language edition in the U.S.

■ DOES IT WORK?

An experiment by The Atlantic's Adam Felder found that the comments change how people see the article itself — for better or worse. De Correspondent editor-in-chief Rob Wijnberg says he sees "a lot less" toxicity in their comments section than elsewhere. Articles on the site often receive 100 or more contributions, many of which add context or additional information to the original reports.
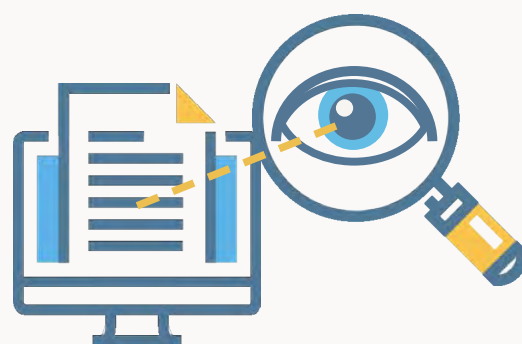
■ HOW TO DO IT

Only De Correspondent's paying members, using their real names, may leave contributions. They are asked to "share what you know" — one of 10 "house rules" — as well as to stay on topic and not to treat De Correspondent as a diary. The outlet's correspondents participate and redirect conversations that veer off course. When a violation occurs, editors delete the comment and email the offender to remind them of the rules.

Deputize the community

■ WHAT IS IT?

The Deputy Program at the Alabama Media Group recruits and trains local residents who provide verified story tips, ask questions and offer perspectives from communities that often go uncovered. The program, launched in 2017, has recruited more than 30 active deputies to connect with communities that include homeless people, undocumented immigrants, prisoners and ex-prisoners. Their contributions have informed stories about topics including community organizing, the working poor and voter registration by jail inmates.


■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Deputy Program is the brainchild of Connor Sheets, an investigative reporter with AL.com in Birmingham, who developed the program as a fellow at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri. The program uses the text-messaging platform GroundSource. Sheets said the program takes only a small investment of time or money: Two hours per week and $20 a month or less for messaging.

■ DOES IT WORK?

While the primary result of the Deputy Program is to create better connections between journalists and under-covered communities, participants also learn about the importance of accuracy and verification in journalism. Significantly, the deputies at AL.com are racially diverse; the American Press Institute says inclusion is key to gaining trust of new audiences and improving business models for news.
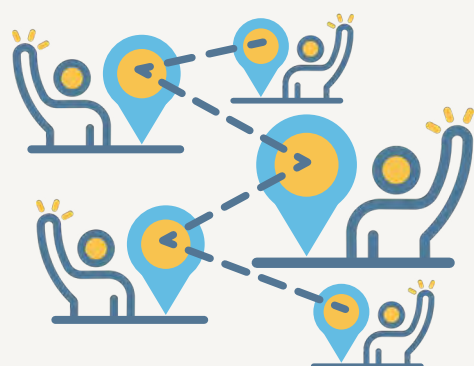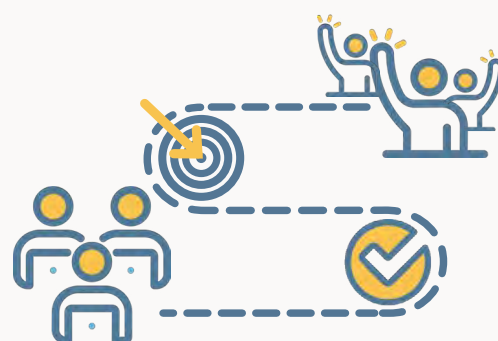

■ HOW TO DO IT

Recruitment is important. The Deputy Program recruits people who are already engaged in a geographic or topical community and have strong networks. A low barrier to entry is another important factor: While participants learn to verify information, the project does not ask them to produce actual stories and GroundSource makes it easy for them to keep in touch. Sheets created this guide to setting up a Deputy Program.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ **Engagement**

Take the pledge

■ WHAT IS IT?

People take an online "Pro-Truth Pledge," promising to do a dozen things research shows help people be more truthful. Those include: fact-checking information before sharing it, citing sources, asking others to retract false information and discouraging people from using unreliable sources. Organizers believe the pledge works because it focuses on concrete actions rather than the unsettled concept of "the truth."
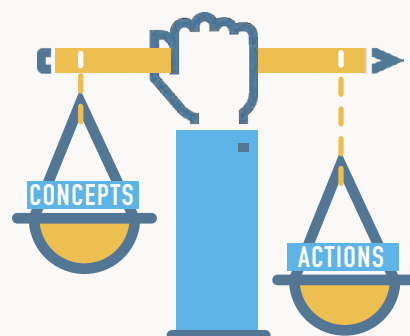
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Gleb Tsipursky, a professor at Ohio State University, developed the pledge with a team of behavioral scientists. It launched in December 2016 through Intentional Insights, a nonprofit of nonpartisan volunteers Tsipursky co-founded. More than 7,000 people, primarily in the United States, have signed the pledge, including three members of the U.S. Congress and more than 1,000 other public officials who are listed in the project website. This video explains the project.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Two studies showed the pledge had an impact. One study asked participants to evaluate their behaviors before and after signing the pledge. Participants reported significant changes, including more fact-checking, a reluctance to share incendiary posts and a willingness to push back when others shared false information. A second study examined Facebook posts before and after they took the pledge. Researchers found large, statistically significant changes in behavior, including fewer posts with misinformation and more citing of sources.

1 FACT-CHECK
2 CITE SOURCE
3 RETRACT
4 DISCOURAGE
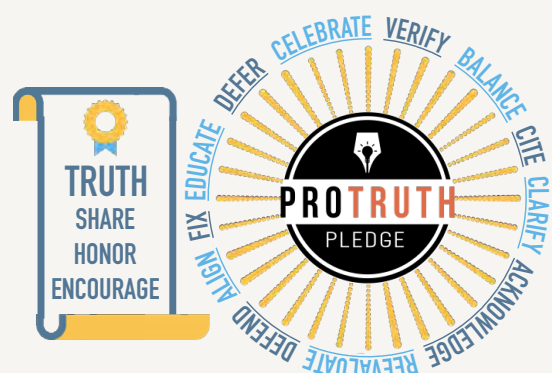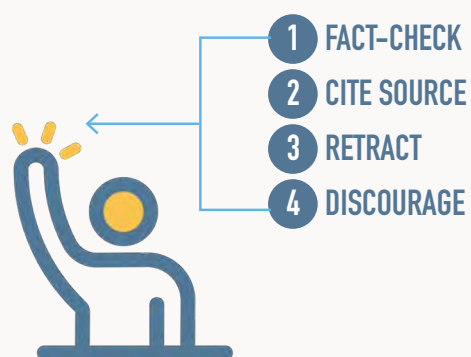
■ HOW TO DO IT

You can take the pledge here. The page also lists the 12 behaviors. Organizers also ask members of the public to encourage their elected representatives to take the pledge. The project provides instructions for contacting representatives, including a pitch that says taking the pledge will assure the public that the politician is a person of integrity. People can also report any violation. In addition to English, the pledge is available in Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Russian, Ukrainian and Hungarian.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶Engagement

Participatory journalism

■ WHAT IS IT?

Vermont Public Radio's Brave Little State is a monthly podcast powered by Hearken. The show investigates listener questions, inviting people to participate in the reporting. In 2017, Brave Little State won four Champion of Curiosity Awards, including the award for Best Participation by a Question Asker. Winooski resident Mike Brown traveled the state for every interview for his suggested story (on aging water and sewer systems). Host Angela Evancie said his questions "made the episode SO much better."
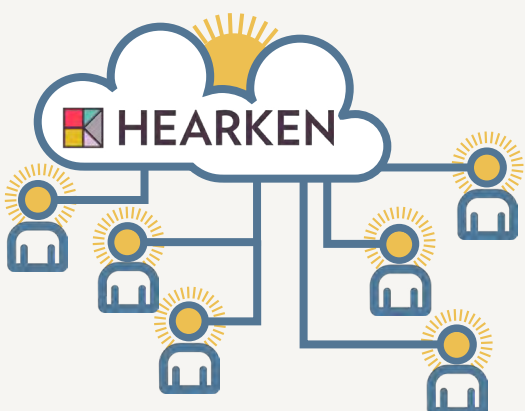
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Hearken, launched in 2015, seeks to advance public-powered journalism. Working with more than 100 news organizations, the company cites numerous examples of increased user engagement and trust, which often accrues to financial well-being through membership or subscription programs, underwriting and advertising. Founder Jennifer Brandon pioneered the approach (Hearken means "to listen") at WBEZ Chicago's Curious City program. Vermont Public Radio launched Brave Little State in 2016 with support from members and the VPR Journalism Fund.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Like other Hearken-powered programs, Brave Little State sees high levels of user engagement than other content. For engagement time, the top four Vermont Public Radio stories so far in 2018 are from Brave Little State. More generally, research shows that engaging the public in setting coverage priorities and helping with reporting builds trust in the journalism that is produced. The Community Listening & Engagement Fund periodically offers subsidies to news organizations that want to use Hearken.

■ HOW TO DO IT

Brave Little State embeds a Hearken "curiosity module" in its stories to solicit questions. It also invites them on the show's home page. The community votes, and the winning questions are investigated by VPR. Often, the question-asker participates. The resulting story is featured in the monthly podcast. "Don't just source questions," Evancie says. "Do everything you can to involve your audience every step of the way."

Dialogue Journalism

■ WHAT IS IT?

Working with news organizations, Spaceship Media brings together communities in conflict for deep conversations. Its technique: dialogue journalism, in which journalists encourage listening and empathy, and respond to any impasse in the conversation with reporting that provides a shared set of facts. In 2016, Spaceship partnered with Alabama Media Group to select and convene two groups of women, Trump voters from Alabama and Clinton voters from California, in a Facebook group for a month-long conversation.
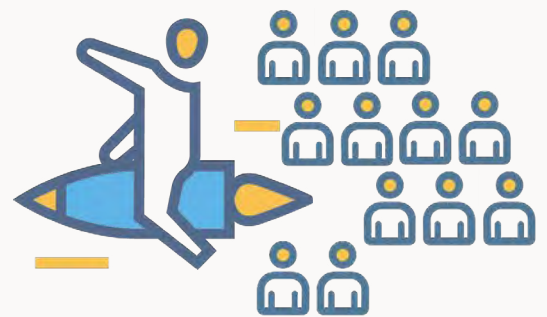
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Co-founders Eve Pearlman and Jeremy Hay launched Spaceship Media in 2016. Pearlman was the founding editor of the Patch website in Alameda in 2010 before supporting the company's engagement efforts nationally. Hay was a reporter with daily newspapers and national magazines. He was a 2015 John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Research-proven indicators such as those identified by The Trust Project are embedded in dialogue journalism. News organizations learn to assemble communities in conflict and design constructive "conversation experiences." Spaceship studies the people and nature of the conflict, moderating and supporting the conversation and allowing it to evolve and develop according to the needs of the participants.
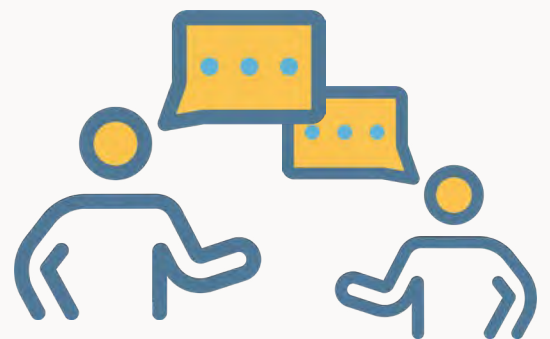
■ HOW TO DO IT

See if Spaceship Media can help with a pilot. News organizations learn to assemble communities in conflict and design constructive "conversation experiences." Spaceship studies the people and nature of the conflict before letting the conversation go where it may. Rather than journalism starting conversations, these are conversations that provoke journalism. One piece of advice from Pearlman is, "Do it for them, not for you."

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ # Engagement

Emphasizing the mission

■ WHAT IS IT?

The Enid News & Eagle, with the Trusting News project, tested a strategy to distance local journalists from the national outlets people are usually thinking of when they complain about "the media." For example: When the News & Eagle shared an article about kindergarten students via Facebook, it noted "these are the kind of stories found in a local newspaper." Other posts, including this one, explain its local mission — even using the hashtags #hometownENE and #NOTmainstreammedia.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Led by engagement strategist Joy Mayer, Trusting News is a Reynolds Journalism Institute research project. Its first phase tested trust-building strategies with 14 newsrooms — among them, the News & Eagle, a top news source for Enid, Oklahoma, for more than 120 years. Trusting News shares results on a searchable web portal. The project's second phase, launched in November 2017, involves 30 newsrooms.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Not everything will work at any given place. News & Eagle editors said 19 tests during the first phase were "especially successful" or ideas to steal. A favorite: the Trusting News theme "Deploy Your Fans," which, among other things, urges news organizations to invite users to "join you in your mission to make the world better informed" by encouraging sharing of reliable news. But 16 other tests "fell flat," including these efforts.

■ HOW TO DO IT

Check out the Trusting News tip sheet on how to distinguish yourself from the so-called "media." The team recommends news organizations "look for chances to explain who you are, what you do and why you're here — your motivations and purpose. … Communicate your values (and therefore your value)." If you are writing (or rewriting) your mission statement, you can borrow or adapt some of the ideas. Trusting News posts updates on Medium.

NEWSCo/Lab
Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ Engagement

Check it Out

■ WHAT IS IT?

[Chequeado](), translated as "Checked," is an independent, nonpartisan media nonprofit recognized for its innovation in connecting with audiences. It verifies what public officials are saying, openly and with public input. The project began October of 2010 and has [15 partners]() throughout Latin America emphasizing transparency and data sharing. It is part of the International Fact-Check Network, and part of a verification trent [Duke University's Reporting Lab]() noted.
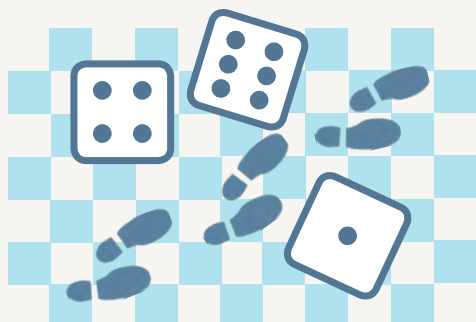
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Chemist Roberto Lugo, physicist [Julio Aranovich]() and economist [José Alberto Bekinschtein]() founded the project in Argentina, using organizations such as [FactCheck.org]() for inspiration. In recent years, director [Laura Zommer]() emphasizes, Chequeado's support is growing from smaller, public donations for its efforts throughout Latin America. Young journalists with the project innovate [using GIFs]() and [interactive games]() to explain the importance of journalistic verification.

■ DOES IT WORK?

[Media experts]() noted its [reach and impact]() during the 2015 Argentinian presidential election with live-debate checks and shares. [Olivia Sohr,]() special projects coordinator, said it has 206,000 Twitter and 68,000 Facebook followers. [Alexios Mantzarlis,]() director of Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network, called it a [global leader]() because it sparked independent fact-checking throughout Latin America with [Agency Lupa]() (Brazil), [ColombiaCheck]() and [Lie Detector]() of La Silla Vacía (Colombia), among others.

■ HOW TO DO IT

Engaging with the public is key in following Chequeado's model. Users can access education platform [Chequeador](), which helps to teach users how to do their own fact checking. A life-sized [interactive board game]() traveled to cities highlighting a local, community issue. Directors use promotional [crowdsourcing]() through [videos]() on social media ([Twitter]() and [Facebook]()) to request public donations. Innovations director [Pablo Martín Fernández]() provided [strategy tips](), including successful formats and images.

NEWSCo/Lab
Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ Transparency

Introduce yourselves

■ WHAT IS IT?

Reporter bios, photos and author pages humanize journalists and establish their expertise — and will help search engines and social media platforms surface bona fide journalism and raise its visibility.
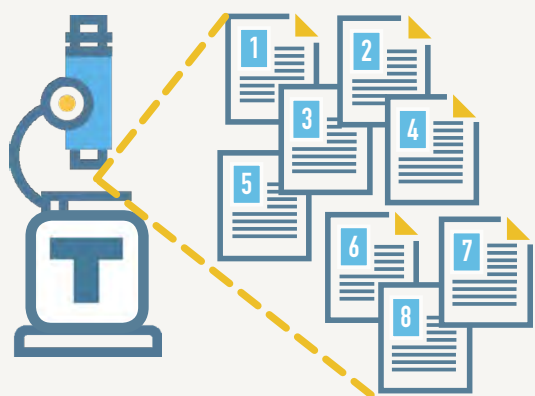
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Many news organizations have adopted this practice. The Trust Project recommends it as one of eight core indicators of trustworthiness based on extensive research. The research involved interviews with members of the public who said knowing about a reporter's background and expertise gives them more confidence they can trust a story. (The Trust Project is an international consortium of news organizations.)

■ DOES IT WORK?

The Trust Project is studying the impact at partner news organizations that are piloting implementation of author bios and seven other core indicators. An initial test of news consumers' reactions was promising. Search and social platforms including Facebook and Google are project external partners. They will be able to identify news organizations that implement the indicators and give their work higher visibility.

■ HOW TO DO IT

While the Trust Project recommends specific formats for partner news organizations, others use a variety of approaches. Most publish a photo with the byline. Some link from the byline to a bio page, others publish the bio with the story. Here are examples: Independent Journal Review, Forbes, and KSBW. Interested news organizations also can contact the Trust Project about participating in its next phase.

ASU News Co/Lab
Arizona State University

Truth in sourcing

■ WHAT IS IT?

Two journalists at The Atlantic magazine found they were mostly quoting male scientists as experts in their stories, though many women scientists are equally expert. The journalists wrote about this shortcoming. One followed up to report how he increased representation of women as sources to 50 percent, more accurately reflecting the field.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Adrienne La France and Ed Yong of The Atlantic explored the issue of predominantly male sourcing in their writing about scientific topics. La France examined the gender gap in her work in 2013 and again in 2016, finding that only about one-fourth of her sources were women, which she said was "distressing. "Yong followed up in 2018 with his own account of "How I Spent Two Years Trying to Fix the Gender Imbalance in My Stories."

■ DOES IT WORK?

Because La France and Yong repaired their sourcing openly, they've encouraged others. Yong's post, for example, generated more than 7,000 retweets. Other journalists said they would adopt his practices. Sourcing is a major issue. Communities that do not see themselves represented often perceive this as deliberate bias. The American Press Institute says inclusion and focused listening helps news organizations gain trust and strengthen business models.
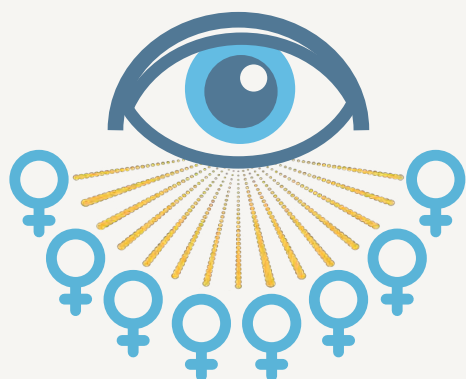
■ HOW TO DO IT

Yong uses search and social media to identify female experts, or, if he is writing about a research paper, he looks at related studies that are cited. He recommends Diverse Sources and Request a Woman Scientist. (Also, Brookings launched Sourcelist). He continues searching until he has a source list that includes several women. He tracks how he is doing on a simple spreadsheet as "a vaccine against self-delusion." He said the practices add about 15 minutes to his workload.

ASU®
News
Co/Lab
Arizona State University

CrossCheck That Election

■ WHAT IS IT?

To test CrossCheck, newsrooms, universities, nonprofits and tech companies partnered to fact-check statements leading up to the 2017 French presidential election. The project monitored social media and the public submitted 600 questions. Journalists produced 64 reports that also described the verification process and carried the logos of the multiple news organizations that checked out the claims.
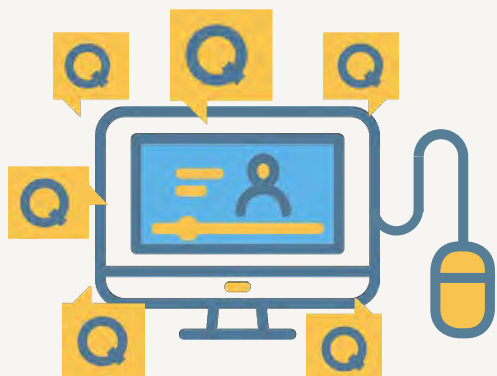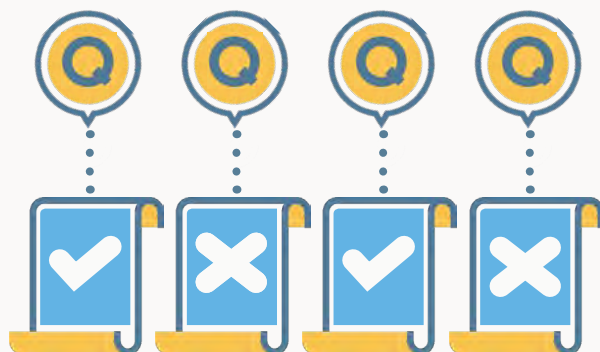
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

First Draft, now a project of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University, coordinated the effort. Google News Lab and Facebook provided funding. CrossCheck used a Hearken plugin to enable people to submit questions. Other partners included Le Monde, Bloomberg News, Storyful, Mashable, AFP and Buzzfeed. First Draft is run by Dr. Claire Wardle, a global expert on user-generated content.

■ DOES IT WORK?

A study of people who submitted questions found that having multiple newsrooms reporting and explaining the verification process increased trust in the reporting. Some shared the fact-checks with friends who had shared misinformation. Crosscheck attracted 180,000 Facebook followers and its short videos drew 1.2 million page views. More lessons here.

■ HOW TO DO IT

CrossCheck relied on quick partners, a consistent and openly explained fact-checking process, and the focal point of a major election. (For more, see this comprehensive report.) First Draft wants to bring the CrossCheck model to other elections, including in the U.S. In addition, it has published guides to fighting misinformation and launched an online verification course.

Fact-checkers' Code of Principles

■ WHAT IS IT?

The code lists five principles to guide organizations that "regularly publish independent, reports on the accuracy of statements by public figures, major institutions and other widely circulated claims." The principles: Be nonpartisan, fair, honest, clear and explain your sources, methods and funding. Duke Reporters' Lab found 136 active fact-checking projects in 50 countries, with more than a dozen in the United States. The number has grown rapidly since 2015.

FAIR
HONEST
METHODOLOGY
CLEAR
SOURCES

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The International Fact-Checking Network developed the code in consultation with fact-checkers from around the world. The network, based at Poynter, uses the code to vet potential members. One approved member is the pioneering Politifact. (In line with the network's code of principles, Politifact offers this explanation of its "Truth-O-Meter" process.) Politifact won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009 for its fact-checking during the 2008 election campaign.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Director Alexios Mantzarlis says the network, with more than 40 member organizations in 27 countries, is just beginning to track impact. As researchers try to define the fact-checking that works best, a 2014 study of 2,100 legislators in nine states found that the mere existence of fact-checking can matter. When reminded that untruths could be exposed by Politifact, legislators were less likely to make questionable statements than their peers.
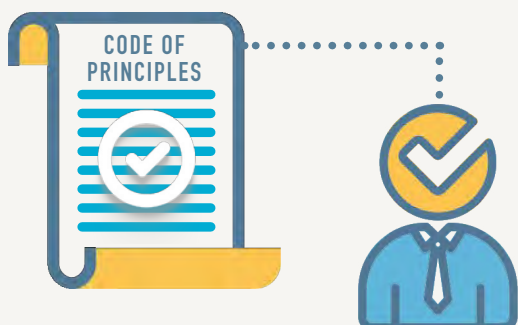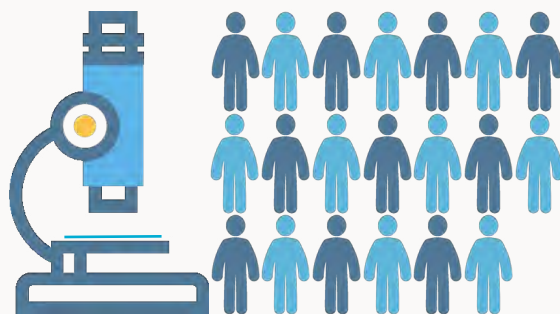
■ HOW TO DO IT

CODE OF PRINCIPLES

Any news organization can choose to follow the code of principles. Organizations regularly doing fact-checks can apply to the International Fact-Checker's network through this process, which includes vetting by experts using this list of requirements. Facebook recognizes only fact-checkers who abide by the code.

NEWSCo/Lab
Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ Transparency

Following the money

■ WHAT IS IT?

People want to understand the money behind the news. Best practices include publishing information about where a news organization's revenue comes from, including grants and donations. In addition, it is helpful to publish information about ownership of the news outlet and ethics policies related to editorial independence from sources of funding.
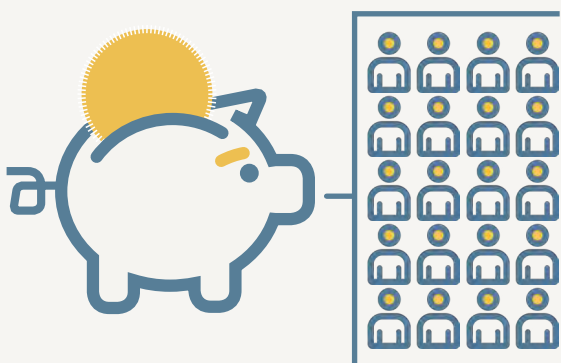
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Many nonprofit news organizations already detail funding. NJ Spotlight and the Center for Investigative Reporting, for example, list major donors. Texas Tribune is among those that note when a donor is mentioned in a news story. ProPublica's disclosure page is a model. The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism explains that funders "exercise no control..." On the commercial side, The Economist details its ownership structure.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Based on consumer research, the Trusting News Project at Reynolds Journalism Institute recommends that news organizations disclose their funding sources and policies. News consumers often assume corporate interests or donors control the editorial process, when at quality outlets that is not the case. Trusting News partner newsrooms have begun testing these and other practices.
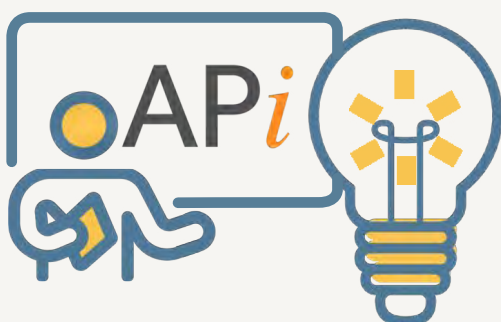
■ HOW TO DO IT

A major study led the American Press Institute to offer this guidance on funding transparency for nonprofit news organizations and these ideas for for-profit newsrooms. Include information about funding, ownership and ethics policies on an "About" or "Who we are" page on the news organization's website and feature links to that page on news stories.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ # Transparency

Lifting the curtain

■ WHAT IS IT?

A weekly Toronto Star feature story that takes readers behind the scenes in the newsroom to explain how journalists do their jobs. Examples: "How the Star decides when to publish a breaking story," "How the Star's editorial board can be critical of governments it endorsed," or "Blue Jays beat reporter Laura Armstrong on filing after a late night game" (the most popular so far.)

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Toronto Star launched the feature in 2017 as part of a trust initiative, seeking to "bring readers closer to the reporting and decision-making behind our stories." A staff committee looks for other ways to make the work more transparent, including better labeling of news and opinion, with glossary. The Star, a Canadian news leader, also has a public editor who regularly writes about journalism and reader feedback.

■ DOES IT WORK?

The stories have attracted an engaged readership that is offering suggestions for greater transparency, according to Jayme Poisson, an investigative reporter who is leading the staff committee. Research by the Trusting News project, including interviews with 8,728 news consumers, shows that news organizations can build trust by explaining their processes and humanizing journalists.

■ HOW TO DO IT

A dedicated reporter writes each story. That usually takes about two days a week. Ideas come from reader questions or staff members. One came from an editor who faced an ethical dilemma: Whether or not to go off the record with Canada's prime minister. Together, the weekly features create a library to which the staff can direct readers as questions about coverage arise.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ Transparency

Long live the interview

■ WHAT IS IT?

A Frontline series on Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election produced some 70 hours of interview video that did not make the aired version. Enter "The Putin Files," 56 extended interviews with the story's sources: 33 video packages and 23 transcripts. "Our Sources. On the Record. At Your Fingertips," says the web site, urging viewers to navigate by theme or person and to pick and share excerpts of their own.
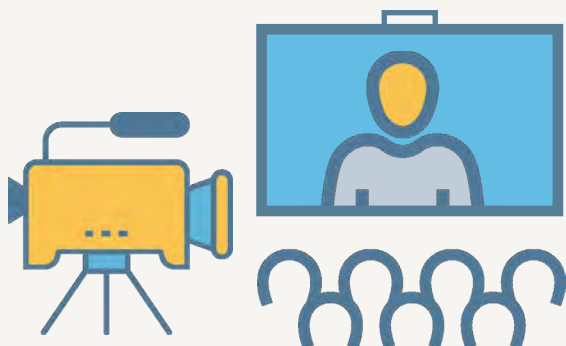
FRONTLINE

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Frontline producers wanted viewers to see the longer interviews that they had shaped into their series. Executive producer Raney Aronson-Rath said they did it as part of the Frontline Transparency Project and ongoing efforts to publish interview transcripts. Media writer James Warren said Frontline is "turning the gripe of 'biased editing' on its head as it discards a sacred tenet of most TV executives, namely not disclosing their 'outtakes.' "

■ DOES IT WORK?

People responded. The interviews were seen more than 500,000 times in the first five months after the series aired. Viewers spent an average of 28 minutes on the interviews, about twice as long as typical web site visits. Practical transparency practices such as posting extended interviews long have been thought to increase credibility, though the size and success of the Frontline effort takes the practice to a new level.

FRONTLINE
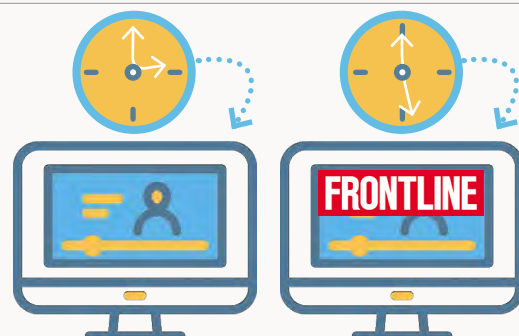
■ HOW TO DO IT

A project goal was to "experiment and create tools that other journalists and news organizations could adapt," Aronson-Rath said. Phil Bennett and researchers at Duke University tested off-the-shelf programs geared for audio and video interviews with text. They have published a guide.

ASU News Co/Lab
Arizona State University

NEWSCo/Lab

Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ Transparency

Publish your standards

■ WHAT IS IT?

Journalists who publish their standards provide a wider context for how and why their news organization does its work. These include a mission statement, overall ethics policies as well as rules on doing corrections and using anonymous sources. Publishing standards gives news consumers a measuring stick with which to assess news. Importantly, search engines and platforms can detect these indicators of trust and use them to surface authoritative news.
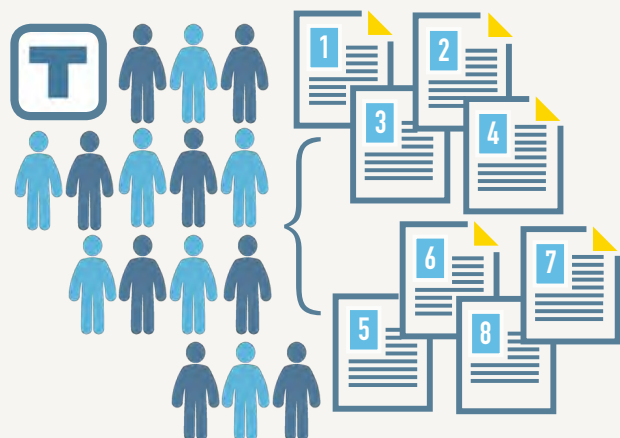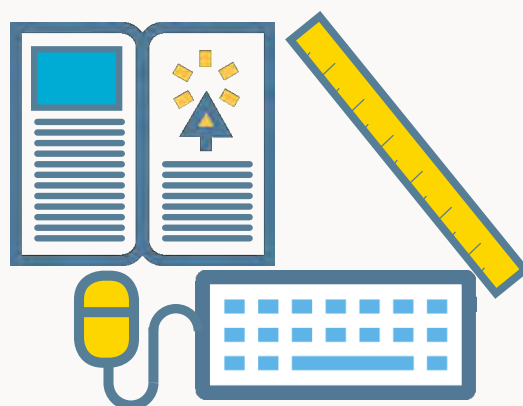
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The nonpartisan Trust Project used comprehensive research to identify 37 "Trust Indicators" that people say give them greater confidence in the credibility of news. Publishing standards is one of eight core indicators of trustworthiness determined in collaboration with leaders of 75 news organizations. The Trust Project works with an international consortium of news organizations as well as external technology partners Facebook, Google, Twitter and Bing.

■ IS IT WORKING?

News organizations launching pilots of core indicators in late 2017 include The Washington Post, Mic, The Economist and several European news outlets. The initial results are promising: Initial tests of news consumers' reaction to indicators created a "statistically significant shift in attitude about whether the site was trustworthy," Trust Project director Sally Lehrman said.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

■ HOW TO DO IT

News organizations can contact the Trust Project about participating in its next phase of implementation. For organizations that want to draft and publish policies, here are examples from news organizations in the pilot: Mic, The Economist, and the BBC.

POLICY

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NEWSCo/Lab
Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy:
Best practices

▶ **Transparency**

Youth take over

■ **WHAT IS IT?**

Students take over a professional newsroom as part of the annual Projekt Junge Zeitung (Project Young Newspaper). More than 200 high-school and college-aged students in Germany, 16 to 22 years old, spend five months learning about journalism. During evenings and weekends, they prepare for the day they "take over." Key staff members play supporting roles. The project's "young newspaper" is published on a Saturday in the place of the newspaper's regular edition, reaching 100,000 readers.
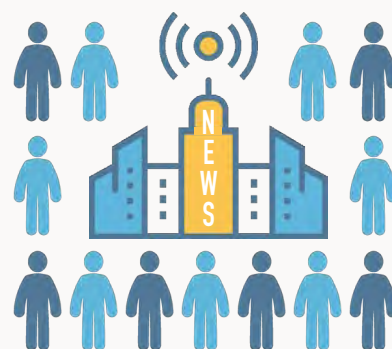
■ **WHO'S BEHIND IT?**

Frankfurter Neue Presse newspaper, based in Frankfurt, hosts the annual "takeover." Why? To attract readers, interact with young people and recruit future journalists. The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) highlighted and promoted similar projects worldwide with this survey. (In spring 2018 in the United States, San Francisco's KQED radio held a similar "youth takeover" with students from 10 Bay Area high schools.)

■ **DOES IT WORK?**

Students' interest is growing — from 180 in 2008, when Projekt Junge Zeitung began, to more than 250 in recent years. A third of the students have joined the program more than once. WAN-IFRA highlighted it as one of five projects that promote news literacy. The American Press Institute commissioned WAN-IFRA's Youth Engagement and News Literacy division to detail the scores of ways newsrooms help people understand how news works by engaging with young people.

INTRODUCE, GUIDE, CREATE, PROMOTE, EXPLORE, HELP

■ **HOW TO DO IT**

Projekt Junge Zeitung recruits by contacting schools and youth clubs, advertising the project widely and contacting past participants. All students are welcome. Some six to eight companies help sponsor the program with packages ranging from 3,000 to 11,000 Euros. KQED's version asked students to pitch story ideas. 106 stories were submitted and published to the website, and 16 were aired via radio or podcasts.

ASU News Co/Lab
Arizona State University

Track hoaxes and bots

■ WHAT IS IT?

Two tools help users find bogus stories and see who — humans or bots — is spreading the falsehoods on Twitter. Hoaxy finds stories based on key words and maps their spread. Hoaxy employs the second tool, Botometer, to assess the likelihood that an account is automated. Botometer also can be used on its own: type in Twitter handles to see if the users (or followers or friends) may be bots.
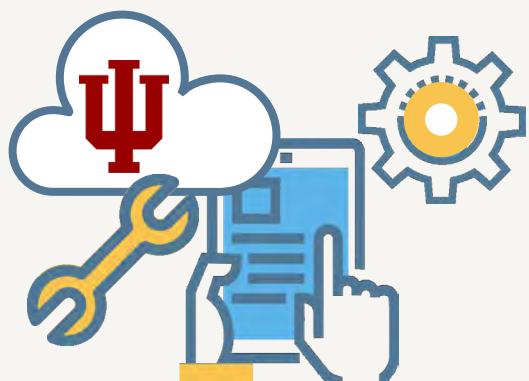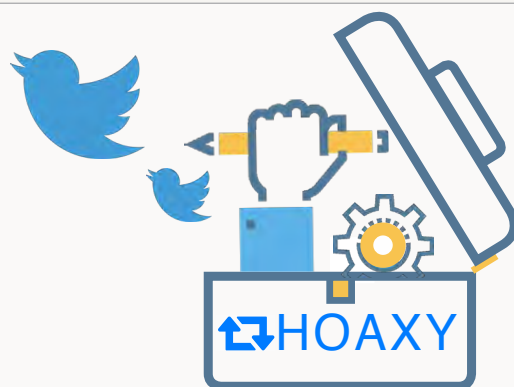
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

A team led by Filippo Menczer, a professor in the School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering at Indiana University Bloomington, developed the tools with support from the Knight Prototype Fund, a partnership of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Rita Allen Foundation and the Democracy Fund to fight misinformation and build trust in credible news and information. Menczer discusses Hoaxy and Botometer in this video.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Hoaxy and Botometer process hundreds of thousands of queries daily. Since they launched in 2017, data from the two tools has enabled researchers at Indiana University and elsewhere to study how information flows online (video). Science Magazine detailed the seriousness of fabricated news on Twitter. Pew Research Center used the Botometer to conclude that nearly two-thirds of the links to popular websites on Twitter are shared by automated accounts.
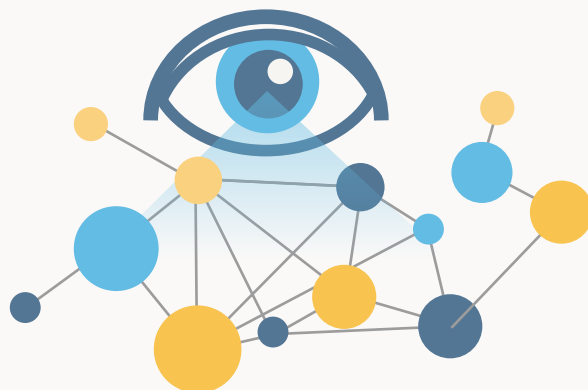
■ HOW TO DO IT

The tools are available free online — Hoaxy here and Botometer here. Journalists may find the tools particularly helpful in assessing whether trending stories are driven by public interest or bots. The center also recently launched Fakey, a web and mobile news literacy game that mixes factual news with false reports and lets players earn points by distinguishing credible reports from low-credibility reports.
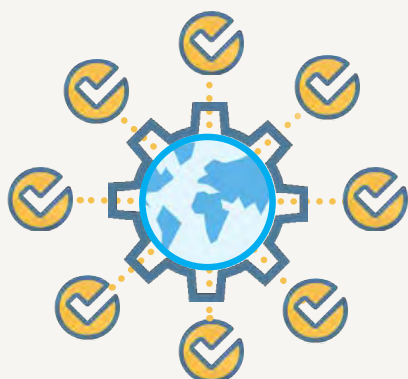
Share the Facts

■ WHAT IS IT?

Share the Facts is a widget that highlights relevant, credible fact-checks of politicians and other public figures and makes them easily shareable. The widget enables Google, Amazon and other platforms to more readily identify fact-checks through machine-readable code. Journalists can embed a related fact-check in a story. News consumers can embed the widget to share on Facebook and Twitter. Since the project launched in 2016, participants have created 15,000 widgets.

Share the Facts

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Share the Facts was developed by the Duke Reporters' Lab and Jigsaw, a technology incubator within Alphabet, the parent company of Google. Fourteen organizations in seven countries use the widget, including PolitiFact and The Washington Post. Partners are vetted by the Reporters' Lab and a majority of them are members of the International Fact-Checking Network.

■ DOES IT WORK?

The widget has enabled Google and other platforms to spotlight fact-checks, according to Erica Ryan, project manager. Share the Facts partners say their digital traffic from search engines grows after they start using the widget. In general, more research is needed, but one study suggests that popular storytelling formats (such as video) make fact-checks more consumable, and another says Twitter users are more likely to accept corrections from friends and followers and less likely on political stories.

■ HOW TO DO IT

Fact-checkers can contact team@sharethefacts.org. The Reporters' Lab vets fact-checkers to determine whether they are unbiased, clear communicators. Approved partners gain access to a simple online widget maker form that complies with the ClaimReview format that search engine machines use to read content. The widgets can be customized with the fact-checkers' logos and ratings, such as Pinocchios or the Truth-O-Meter. The Reporters' Lab also created guidelines for using the widget.

MOSTLY TRUE
POLITIFACT
TRUTH-O-METER™

Learning newspapers

■ WHAT IS IT?

Press Pass is a news literacy program that engages Irish teenagers by helping them learn different writing styles. The program targets 16-year-olds, preparing them to enter a national contest. Retired editor John Moore called this "one of the better national youth news literacy programs," similar to the US.-based News Literacy Project. The course work is open to all students, who learn the role of newspapers in a free press while analyzing news stories.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI), now known as NewsBrands Ireland, and the Department of Education started the program in 2012. It was designed for students to "learn all about newspapers and the writing, analysis, preparation and photography that's involved in putting one together." Twitter and The Irish League of Credit Unions have sponsored the program. The project was tagged as "notable" by Áine Kerr, co-founder of NevaLabs.

■ DOES IT WORK?

More than 10,000 transition-year students participated in 2018, and nearly 80,000 in the popular initiative's first six years. A total of 255 schools (half of those eligible) took part the first year, and the number keeps growing. WAN-IFRA compiled a database noting the program checked eight of 13 news literacy categories (including doing production, simulation and learning how journalism works) in Aralynn McMane's report about worldwide news-literacy practices.
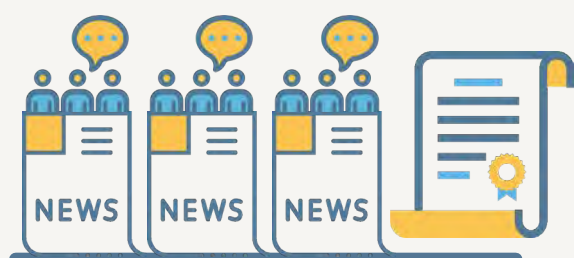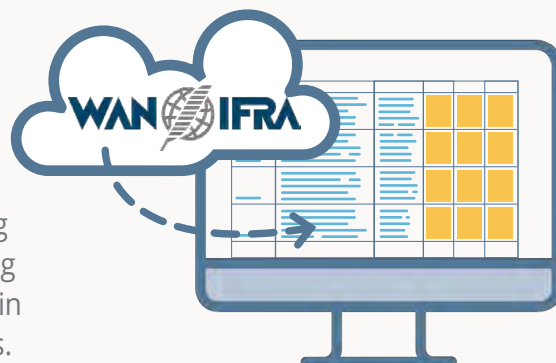
■ HOW TO DO IT

This five-month-long program begins with in-class studies, including a workbook to guide analysis of Ireland's national newspapers. Teachers receive a guide for class discussion and students use newspapers in the classroom for study as they eventually attempt to create their own journalism to enter into a national competition.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ **Education**

Free Speech Lesson

■ **WHAT IS IT?**

In Nieuws in de Klas, which translates to "News in the Classroom," students pretend to be dictators and pick newspaper articles to censor. That and other "Roadshow" activities help students learn media literacy and the role of newspapers. Project goals include developing an understanding of freedom of expression and "world citizenship."

**Nieuws in de klas**
Het educatieplatform van NDP Nieuwsmedia
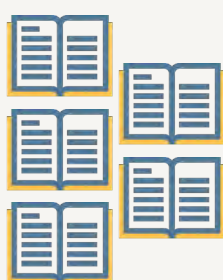
■ **WHO'S BEHIND IT?**

Nieuws in de Klas, supported by the Dutch News Media Association, partners with Ppress, Media.21 and Mediawijs. Similarly, in France, CLEMI gives publications to schools and promotes a week of news literacy, focusing in recent years (after the Charlie Hebdo attacks) on "Freedom of Expression." In the U.S., press freedom education comes from Freedom Forum Institute, The News Literacy Project, the Bill of Rights Institute and many others.

■ **DOES IT WORK?**

Academic studies argue that "bad guy play" (such as the "dictator" exercise) can teach complex concepts, including morality. A national report on the Dutch project said the classroom provided a safe space for younger students to learn how news works and older students to debate types of free speech. U.S. studies show students with heavy media use and class instruction regarding free press are more savvy and supportive of free expression.

FREE PRESS
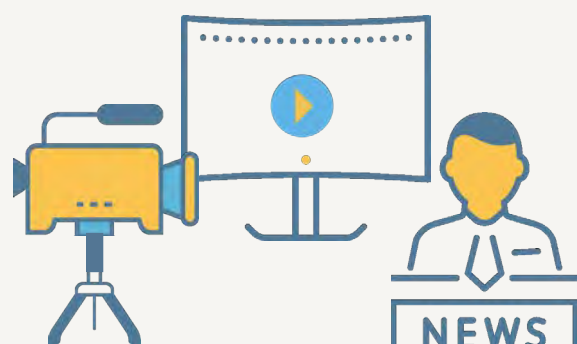
■ **HOW TO DO IT**

Organizers created a short video to explain the roadshow. The Roadshow's censorship exercise is "a very popular activity." Teachers can choose from "news packages" and "digital packages" to receive access to newspapers and magazines and news websites. Students receive newspapers at home for two weeks as part of the project. A local reporter often visits the classroom to moderate an open discussion.

NEWS

A Newspaper in Education

■ WHAT IS IT?

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program works with local schools to make its journalism a "living textbook." Students and teachers get free access to Times print and digital products. The newspaper develops award-winning teaching materials that connect Florida Standards learning objectives with the news. The program also offers resources to help students better understand the news, and its sponsors chip in rewards (like free baseball tickets) for students who participate.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Times program is managed by Jodi Pushkin, an educator and former journalist. Others with active Newspaper In Education programs include the Denver Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, and the Chicago Tribune. In addition to developing their own materials, the outlets subscribe to website services, educational resources, and other syndicated materials provided by Online Publications, a for-profit company that operates NIEonline.com.

■ DOES IT WORK?

The Tampa Bay Times is consistently recognized as a leader in media literacy and news education. Since 2012, the Times NIE program has won multiple awards from the National Newspaper Association, the Florida Newspaper Advertising and Marketing Executives, and the Association for Garden Communicators, in addition to receiving international recognition from the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers.
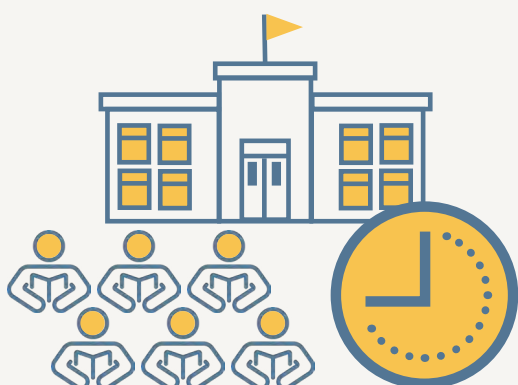
■ HOW TO DO IT

The Times provides newspapers and teaching materials to local schools and periodically hosts workshops to help teachers build current events into their lesson plans. The Times also partners with local organizations on projects such as Reading with the Rays, which challenges students to spend at least 24 hours during the summer reading a newspaper or book. Successful participants win tickets to a Tampa Bay Rays baseball game.

Building news savvy:
Best practices

▶Education

Learning To Check Facts

■ WHAT IS IT?

[Fact-Checking: How to Improve Your Skills in Accountability Journalism](#) is a self-directed online course on fact-checking for journalists and non-journalists that covers why fact-checking is important, what to check, the process of fact-checking, common mistakes and how to avoid them. The course also includes tips on establishing and finding funding for fact-checking operations.
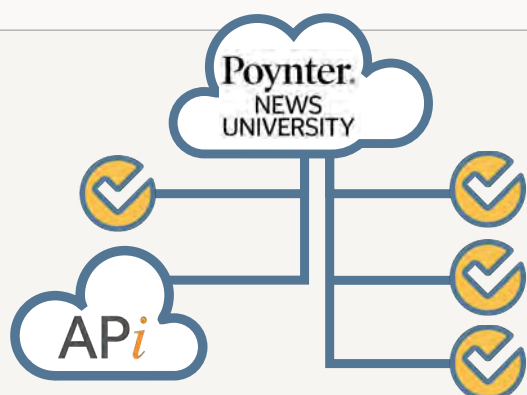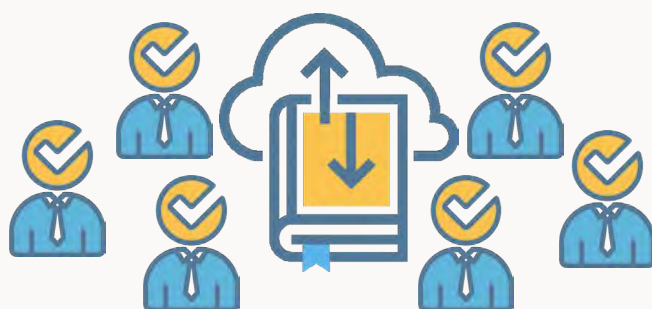
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Poynter's [News University](#) partnered with the [American Press Institute](#) to create the course. Poynter is the hub of the International Fact-Checking network. API conducts research on audience metrics, innovation and business models for journalism, including the 2016 study, "[A new understanding: What makes people trust and rely on news](#)."

■ DOES IT WORK?

Nearly 2,700 people have enrolled in the NewsU course, for good reason. [Research](#) by the Trust Project shows that people value truthful, verified news. A 2015 [survey](#) of 10,000 journalism and communications school graduates found that two-thirds considered fact-checking "very" or "somewhat" effective. Important: [Video seems to work better](#). See a [TruthBuzz winner](#) from Italy [here](#).
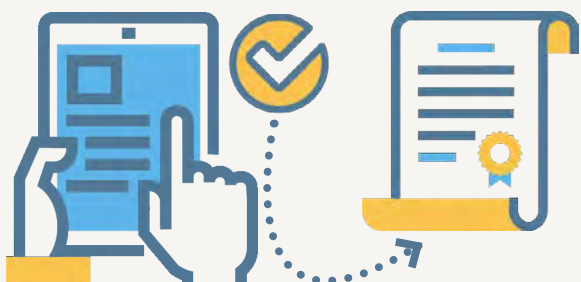
■ HOW TO DO IT

[Register](#) at NewsU in order to enroll in the free [class](#), which takes two to four hours to complete. News U also offers a [Spanish-language version](#). The course is also part of a [suite](#) of online fact-checking courses that cost $99 and offer a fact-checking certificate on completion.

NEWSCo/Lab

Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ # Education

Learn By Doing

■ WHAT IS IT?

The Journalistic Learning Initiative helps students report and craft their own journalism — improving media literacy as well as general learning. As part of its project-based approach, the initiative encourages student teams to choose a topic, then guides them through research, identifying experts, conducting Skype interviews, and finally producing and publishing a work of journalism.
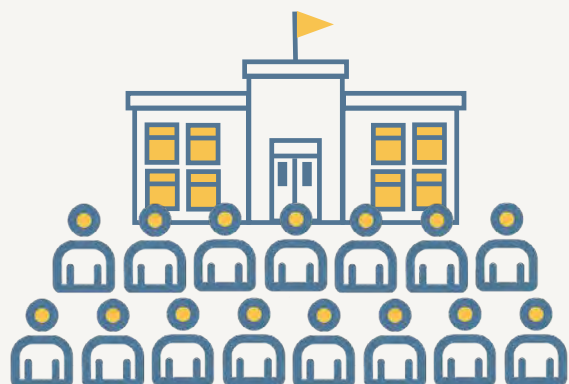
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Initiative works in partnership with the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication and College of Education. Co-founded by journalism professor Ed Madison, journalism and English teacher Esther Wojcicki, and philanthropist and educator Tara Guber, JLI has worked with more than 500 students at nine Oregon and California high schools. The program's partners include Adobe, Alphabet, the Student Press Law Center and the Newseum.

■ DOES IT WORK?

In a 2016 assessment, nearly 80 percent of middle school participants said the program helped "improve their critical thinking skills" — a major component of media literacy. Madison's book Newsworthy: Cultivating Critical Thinkers, Readers, and Writers in Language Arts Classrooms shows journalistic learning boosts student performance, building on the work of Indiana University's Jack Dvorak, author of Journalism Kids Do Better.
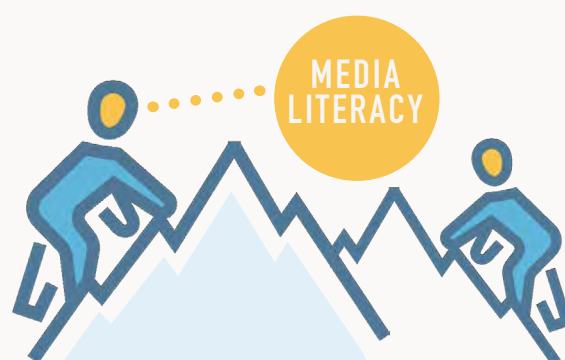
■ HOW TO DO IT

The JLI Educator Institute pays recent journalism graduates a stipend to work at a middle or high school for nine months. (Qualified candidates can apply online.) Student journalism projects are designed in partnership with local English and/or social studies teachers. The projects match students' interests with subject-specific learning goals. Each group's final output — typically a text or multimedia feature — is published. Educators interested in partnering: email info@journalisticlearning.org.

ASU News Co/Lab
Arizona State University

Learning to Discern

■ WHAT IS IT?

Learn to Discern is a media literacy education program developed in Ukraine amid a flood of fear-mongering Russian propaganda. The lessons (including a game) seek "to equip Ukrainian citizens to both identify misinformation and demand better quality information." The critical-thinking curriculum encourages "peer learning" and can be tailored to fit different people or groups.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

IREX is a nonprofit organization that focuses on cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions and increasing access to quality education and information around the world. IREX receives significant funding from the U.S. government, among other funders. After a nine-month pilot for adults, IREX is launching Learn to Discern in schools in Ukraine and developing a pilot for the United States. A prototype of the game — infiltrating a "factory of lies" to expose misinformation — is available in English.

■ DOES IT WORK?

More than 15,000 participated in the program's pilot, and they shared what they learned with 90,000 more people. A related campaign warning of misinformation. reached an estimated 20 million television viewers and eight million radio listeners. (Ukraine has a population of about 44 million.) Evaluators cited a 24 percent increase in participants' ability to identify trustworthy news and a 22 percent increase in the number of people who cross-checked information.
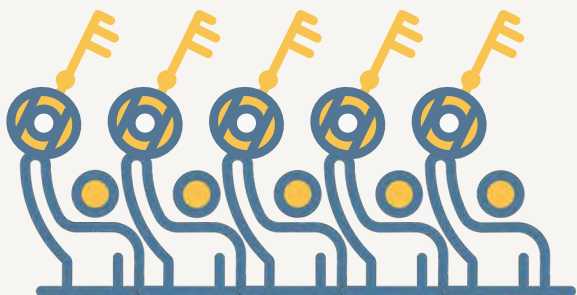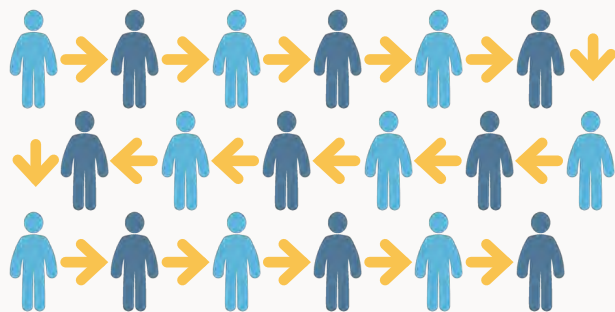
■ HOW TO DO IT

Training sessions for groups of 20 on average were held at libraries, universities and workplaces and lasted about four hours. Keys to success: Instructors customized the program to make it relevant and emphasized critical-thinking skills rather than focusing on singling out good or bad information sources. Participants also learned how to recognize and resist emotional manipulation. For a detailed description of the pilot and its results, see this report.

Checkology

■ WHAT IS IT?

Checkology is an online, on-demand "virtual classroom" that helps students in grades 6-12 distinguish between fact and fiction. Participants learn to make news judgments, explore how the press and citizens can act as watchdogs, detect and dissect viral rumors, understand bias and free speech. Launched in 2016, the widely recognized program has been used by nearly 11,000 teachers serving more than 1.6 million students in the United States and 81 other countries.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The News Literacy Project is an educational nonprofit helping educators and journalists teach middle school and high school students "the essential skills they need to become smart, active consumers of news and information and engaged, informed citizens." Founded in 2009 by former Los Angeles Times journalist Alan Miller, the project has reached hundreds of thousands of students.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Checkology is achieving results similar to the project's highly effective classroom curriculum upon which the online course is based, according to a preliminary assessment. The project found that students in its classroom programs in 2015-16 improved their ability to distinguish between accurate information and false or distorted information. Nine in 10 students said they were better able to collect, use, and produce credible information as a result of the program.

■ HOW TO DO IT

Educators can sign up here. Checkology offers a basic service that is free and a premium model that is also free until July 2018. Basic service provides materials that teachers can display and discuss in a classroom setting. Premium service offers lessons and tools students can access directly. Checkology can be completed in 12-15 hours with a high-speed internet connection.

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶Education

Making Sense of the News

■ WHAT IS IT?

Making Sense of the News: News Literacy Lessons for Digital Citizens is a periodic six-week Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) that helps participants develop critical thinking skills so they can better identify reliable news. More than 7,000 people, primarily from six countries, have enrolled in the MOOC since it launched in January 2017.
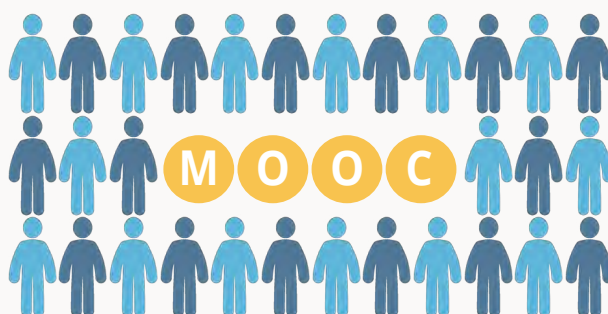
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

The Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University in New York and the University of Hong Kong developed the online course based on a classroom curriculum they have developed and taught during the past decade. More than 15,000 university students in 10 countries have participated in these news literacy programs in the past 10 years, including 10,000 students at Stony Brook.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Participants gave the course a high 4.6 on a five-point scale in an initial 2017 assessment. "Excellent, short and concise. Offers clear and usable methods for critical thinking," one review said. The course draws on Stony Brook's decade-long experience with college and adult-level news literacy education. Other universities have adopted Stony Brook's approach. A 2016 case study concluded the course produced "significantly higher levels of news media literacy … and higher motivation to consume news."

■ HOW TO DO IT

Anyone with a computer and an internet connection can sign up. The MOOC is a six-week course requiring about 2-3 hours a week, but learners set their own pace. The MOOC is offered in English, with Chinese and Spanish subtitles. Participants can audit the course for free or pay $49 to earn a certificate. (You also might review other center material from the center's Digital Resource Center: especially the the Course Pack, updated weekly.

ASU News Co/Lab
Arizona State University

Say It With Graphics

■ WHAT IS IT?

Maximum information, minimum time. Engaging posters explain news literacy and the First Amendment. "Is This Story Share-worthy?" one asks, with key questions to ask on quality, accuracy and fairness. Another helps users "E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News" by considering Evidence, Source, Context, Audience, Purpose and Execution. The posters, aimed primarily at middle, high school and university students, come with notes for teachers.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

NewseumED, the education arm of the Newseum in Washington, D.C., produces the posters (and many other resources). NewseumED offers a Media Literacy Booster Pack that includes activity guides, posters and lesson plans. NewseumED is also the online home of the Media Literacy Maven, with a series of videos that provide tips and ideas for navigating the news.

■ DOES IT WORK?

The posters are popular, downloaded nearly 10,000 times and shared widely. For example, the "Is It Share-worthy?" poster reached more than 630,000 in its first week and got 3,200 shares on Facebook. E.S.C.A.P.E Junk News reached nearly 440,000 with 2,000 shares. Nine in 10 teachers reported that their students gain greater understanding of current (and historical) events through NewseumED resources.
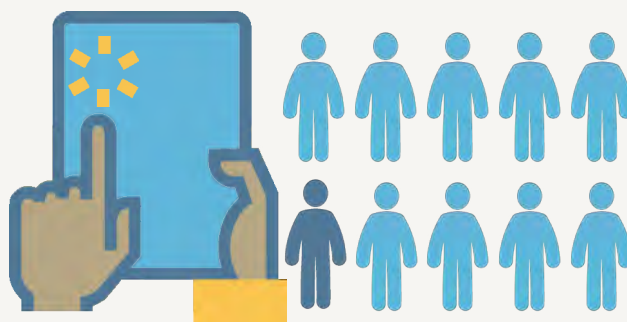
■ HOW TO DO IT

NewseumED offers hundreds of free online resources -- "standards-aligned lesson plans, case studies and more." Its work is supported by leading educators, including Esther Wojcicki, founder of the Palo Alto High School Media Arts Center, who helped develop "Share-worthy" and other news literacy resources. You can register for free to receive unlimited access to resources on the NewseumED website.

▶ Education

Being a journalist

■ WHAT IS IT?

In late 2017 the Washington Post launched a video series called "How to be a journalist." The series uses notable news stories to explain the reporting process, helping people understand the techniques of journalism. Included: how journalists receive tips and do research. Videos are seen by everyone from high school students to regular news consumers.

■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Post on-air reporter Libby Casey hosts and produces the series with the support of executive producer Michelle Jaconi. The newsroom helps out: 2018 Pulitzer Prize winners reporters Stephanie McCrummen and Beth Reinhard joined Casey to explain the investigative process in covering Roy Moore's run for senate, past Pulitzer Prize winners Kimbriell Kelly and database editor Steven Rich explain how to make Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Research by The Trust Project shows that more open journalism is more trustworthy. Engagement in the video series is measured by clicks, tags, shares and comments from the Post website, Amazon Prime, Facebook and YouTube. Journalism school interest (such as Columbia's) is important. Media writer James Warren of Vanity Fair notes that the Post series speaks to trust issues outlined in Poynter's 2017 poll.
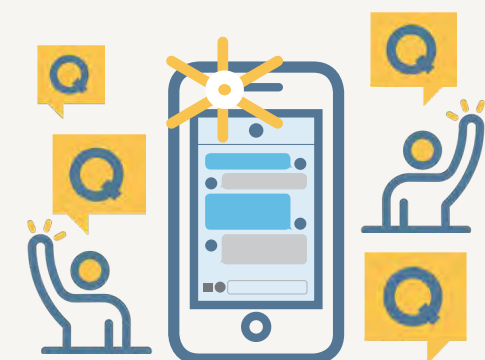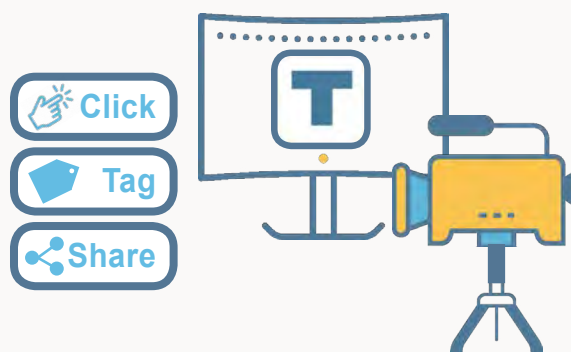
■ HOW TO DO IT

Fancy cameras are not required. Phone videos can work. Use breakouts such as "What is a whistleblower?" to explain concepts. Let questions your journalists get from the public guide you. Executive producer Jaconi told Editor & Publisher to have some fun with the storytelling, and highlight journalists who are best-of-class when it comes to specific techniques (running down sources, interviewing, etc.).

ASU News Co/Lab
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NEWSCo/Lab
Understanding how news works in the digital age

Building news savvy: Best practices

▶ **Education**

Becoming Digital Citizens

■ WHAT IS IT?

Common Sense's award-winning Digital Citizenship Curriculum offers grade-specific lesson plans and teaching materials to help kids learn how to excel in the digital age. The curriculum features three teaching units for grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 and four units for grades 9-12. Each unit consists of five lessons that address topics such as news and media literacy, internet privacy and cyberbullying. In 2016, the Digital Citizenship Curriculum served more than 18 million students.
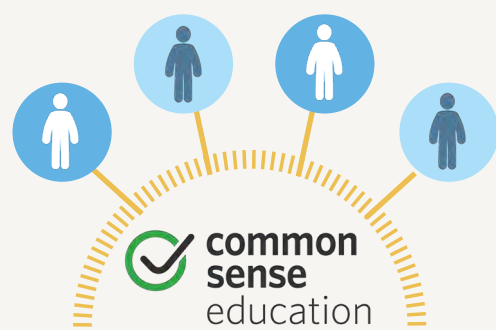
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Founded by California philanthropist Jim Steyer in 2002, Common Sense is a U.S. nonprofit that engages in research, education, and advocacy focused on kids' media consumption and literacy. Its Common Sense Education program manages a range of initiatives, including the Digital Citizenship Curriculum, which is based on research by Dr. Howard Gardner and Harvard University's The GoodPlay Project.

■ DOES IT WORK?

Common Sense Education has recognized more than 12,500 teachers, 2,100 schools, and 94 school districts. The program has received honors from the Digital Innovation in Learning Awards and Tech & Learning, among others. Common Sense's annual report says the curriculum was taught in more than half of U.S. schools during the 2016-17 school year. (New state laws, such as Washington's, bundle school requirements for media literacy, internet safety and digital citizenship.)

■ HOW TO DO IT

Common Sense's Digital Citizenship Curriculum features detailed unit descriptions, games and interactives, learning assessments, companion videos, and other teaching materials -- all of which are free to access and use. (Its online courses for educators require a fee.) Common Sense also hosts a Facebook Group where educators can share resources, experiences and advice. The group has more than 5,600 members and receives about six new comments and posts per day.

Building news savvy:
Best practices
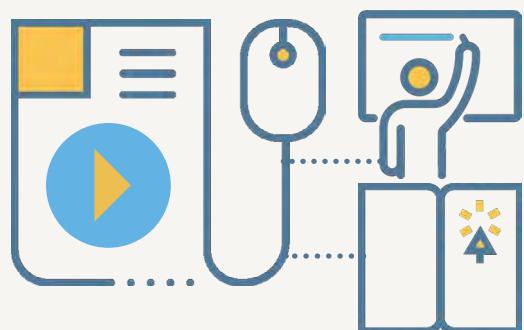
▶Education

Edit Wikipedia

■ WHAT IS IT?

Wiki Education offers free online assignment tools, print resources and staff support to college educators who weave Wikipedia assignments into their courses. Students then create or edit Wikipedia entries, contributing to the Internet's most-visited educational resource. The students must learn to improve Wikipedia articles following the site's editing protocols. Pages on various topics, such as this one on literacy, can be fact-packed with links and footnotes. A revision history section records every change.
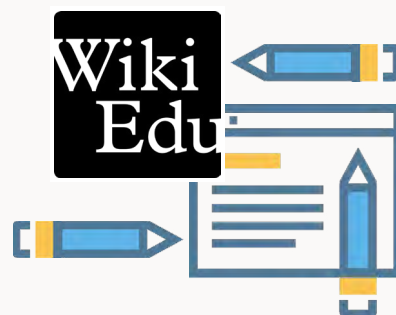
■ WHO'S BEHIND IT?

Wiki Education's executive director is Frank Schulenburg. He was the senior director of programs for Wikimedia Foundation before launching Wiki Education, which spun off from the foundation in 2013; its other programs involve scholars, fellows and partnerships. By engaging instructors and students as contributors, Wiki Education hopes to improve the reach, equity, and quality of information on the site. More than two-thirds of the student contributors identify as women while 80 percent of the typical contributors identify men.

■ DOES IT WORK?

More than 43,000 students have participated in Wiki Education's classroom program and created or improved more than 60,000 Wikipedia articles. According to Wiki Education-sponsored research, students learned information literacy skills in line with the Association of College and Research Libraries' *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education*. In particular, students learned how to find credible source information. The research also concluded that students gain critical research and writing skills.
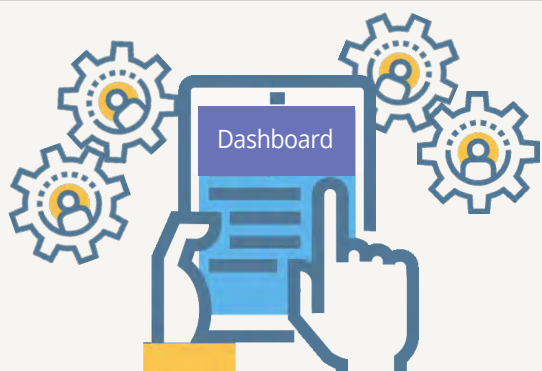
■ HOW TO DO IT

Start with the Wiki Education Dashboard. The Dashboard offers assignment templates, tools, and student trainings. Wiki Education's training libraries provide sections for teachers and students that prepare students to edit. Exploring past courses on the Dashboard will show that articles edited by students in Spring 2018 alone have been viewed more than 25 million times worldwide.

AFTERWORD

This Best Practices Cookbook is one of several open educational resources the News Co/Lab provides to those who want to help people (including journalists) better understand how news works in the digital age. The What We're Reading section on our site features insights from key reports, articles, games and more. We blog regularly on a wide range of issues, including the lab's experiments, news and media literacy, misinformation, newsroom transparency and community engagement. Below you'll find a selection of some of our most recent posts.

News games: engaging tools for fighting misinformation

The Oxygen of Amplification by Whitney Phillips, Data & Society

The Science People See on Social Media by Pew Research Center

How Youth Navigate The News Landscape from the Knight Foundation

API report calls for journalists' help in improving "news fluency"

The best practices were compiled by a team led by **Michele McLellan**. Together with the News Co/Lab, McLellan developed the concept of best practices "recipes" that have a goal of encouraging others to try them. McLellan also led reporting and editing efforts. With writer **Traci Angel**, the reporting team researched a wide variety of innovative uses of transparency, engagement, education and tools that align with the News Co/Lab's mission and pursued leads that had achieved a measurable degree of success. Best practice candidates were interviewed and all information was fact-checked by the team. **Michelle Wise** is the best practices graphic designer. Writers **Ben DeJarnette** and **Simon Galperin** also contributed to the project.

Special thanks to **Sayo Akao** for preparing this brochure with direction from News Co/Lab co-founders **Dan Gillmor** and **Eric Newton**.

ASU News Co/Lab

Arizona State University

The News Co/Lab is a collaborative lab aimed at helping the public find new ways of understanding and engaging with news and information.

We have made it a priority to identify and promote best practices in journalism, education, technology and civics that have proved to work for newsroom and educators around the world. Our "cookbook" of best practices includes more than 30 case studies that can increase education, transparency and engagement in newsrooms of all sizes.

We are continually developing our "cookbook" with proven and replicable resources to improve news and media literacy. We encourage newsrooms to utilize this brochure to identify practices that best fit their needs.

Visit our website at newscollab.org