

### Knowing that we know nothing: News, Information, Truth, & Knowledge

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# Call to Action –
Fake News, Misinformation and Post-Truth
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### Age of (Mis-)Information Bubbles

- Paradox of increased awareness and prevalence of fake news
- Serious challenge that strikes at the core of representative democracy and meaning of knowledge
- Development of legislation against fake news e.g., Germany, Italy, South Africa, Singapore

### Free Speech & Regulation

 Sustaining free speech and enhancing media literacy remains unchanged even in a socalled post-truth era

- Regulating speech, even in the public interest, involves legitimate concerns of potential intrusions to free speech
- Regulation must not weaken the ability of a society to discern and be resilient in the market place of ideas

### **Working Definition**

# Publication of intentionally or knowingly false statements of fact

- designed for active mis- and disinformation,
- through appeals to passion,
- for profit and/or influence (rather than one's enlightened self-interest)

#### **Manifestations**

- Satire/parody
- Misleading content
- Imposter content
- Fabricated content
- False connection
- False context
- Manipulated content



## NID (FAK

propaganda



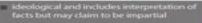
adopted by governments, corporations and non-profits to manage attitudes, values and knowledge



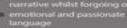
an be beneficial or harmful



partisan



privileges facts that conform to parrative whilst forgoing other







clickbait



eye catching, sensational headlines designed to distract

often misleading and content may not reflect headline

drives ad revenue



conspiracy theory



tries to explain simply complex realities as response to fear or uncertainty

not fassitable and evidence that refutes the conspiracy is regarded as further proof of the conspiracy rejects experts and authority





sponsored content



advertising made to look like editorial

potential conflict of interest for genuine

consumers might not identify content as advertising if it is not clearly labeled



purveyors of greenwashing, miracle cures, anti-vaccination and climate change denial

misrepresents real scientific studies with exaggerated or false claims

often contradicts experts





IMPACT



satire and hoax



social commentary or humour

varies widely in quality and intended meaning may not be apparent

can embarrass people who confuse the content as true



misinformation



includes a mix of factual, false or partly intention may be to inform but author may not be aware that the content is false

false attributions, doctored content and misleading headlines





established news organisations sometimes make mistakes

mistakes can hurt the brand, offend or

reputable orgs publish apologies





entirely fabricated content spread intentionally to disinform

guerrilla marketing tactics; bots, com and counterfeit branding

motivated by ad revenue



#### DIG DEEPER ...

attribution

Authentic images, video or quotes are attributed to the wrong events or person

Content does not represent what the headline and captions suggest

Websites and Twitter accounts that pose as a well-known brand or person

Content, such as statistics, graphs, photos and video have been modified or doctored



### **Platforms for Purveyors of Fake News**

Echo chambers and incubation chambers

Online swarms

Bots

A.I.-powered psychological profiling & targeted advertising

### **Observations: A complex reality**

Fake news is not new: "dark" art of persuasion

 Possesses sheer unflagging will (profit motive and/or social/political/economic influence)

 New intermediaries and platforms increasingly play a prominent filtering, gatekeeping, and influencer role

### **Sharp Edge in Dissemination & Reception**

 Individuals as recipients and purveyors of fake news

 That news consumers may be concerned, in the main, with neither the truth nor falsity – the human appetite for distractions

 Illusionary effect of knowledge and understanding arising from having immediate and easy access to information

### Does good speech have the upper hand?

- Facts, facts, and more facts? Providing people with more and better information and expert reports?
- Communal groupthink dominant, rather than individual rationality. Group loyalty too

 Pointing ignorance or incorrect understanding can backfire – futility of fact checking?

#### # Call to Action

- A multi-stakeholder approach imperative
- Trust as a key attribute The 'how' question

Activist role of repositories of knowledge

"The Place of the Cure of the Soul"

(inscription in the ancient library of Alexandria)

### Reality of consuming (mis-)information

- Consumption of news and information a relational experience
  - Which news/info accessed
  - How news/info processed
  - Relationship with content producers
  - Motivation to believe/disbelieve & to act
  - Cultural norms

Truth and verification time consuming and expensive

#### Action: "Learn it all" mindset

 Critical thinking skills needed; to avoid throwing out good information with the bad

 How people interpret and act on information hinges on the human connection

"Tools" needed to identify fake news



### HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



#### CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



#### **CHECK THE AUTHOR**

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



#### CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



#### **CHECK YOUR BIASES**

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



#### READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



#### SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



#### IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



#### **ASK THE EXPERTS**

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

#### Conclusion

Regulation not the silver bullet

Imperative to develop, share, and nurture media literacy skills

Activist mindset needed





The duty of man who investigates the writings of scientists, if learning the truth is his goal, is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads and ... attack it from every side. He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination of it, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or leniency.

- Ibn al-Haytham (965-1040 CE)