

# Evaluating Information in the Post-truth Era (後真相時代的資訊辨識)

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# A Post-truth Era

- “Post-truth” is the 2016 International Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionaries

# Defining “Post-truth”

Oxford Dictionaries:

- Post-truth is the circumstance in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief

(訴諸情感及個人信念，較陳述客觀事實更能影響輿論的情況。)

- Information overload
- Misinformation and fake news spread around

# Rumor and Propaganda in History

- Neither false news, hidden advertising nor hate speech were invented in our time.
- What is new is the scope and therefore the danger these forces represent.

# New Ecosystem of the Media and Information Environment

- Power shift: everyone is a prosumer
- Mobile phone: convenient for photo and video taking/ immediacy
- Social media & Instant Messaging: Affordances
  - Persistence: the durability of expression and content
  - Visibility
  - Connectivity
  - Spreadability/ sharable
  - Searchability
- Echo Chamber Effect

- Advanced digital technologies

- AI: with the help of bots
- (e.g., Twitter bots)
- Click farms
- Deepfake

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLYRb6VECbo>

- Content farms

- 鏗鏘集: 「內容農場」
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMDJb37oyZ4>

# Types of Fake News & Misinformation

- Six major types of fake news
  - Clickbait
  - Propaganda
  - Satire/Parody
  - Sloppy journalism
  - Misleading headings
  - Biased/slanted news

# Truth vs. Post-Truth

(by Clement So, CUHK)

Truth	Post-Truth
Facts	Beliefs, emotions
Based on reality	Unrestrained construction of reality
Science as basis	Politics, vested interests
Objectivity as criteria	Subjectivity, biased
Accuracy	Mis-information, sensationalism



# Mindset (處理資訊的心態)

- The Crisis of Trust

- The spread of digital technology, creating vast data trails with the latent potential to contradict public statements
- Too much information, too many controversies
- Digital technologies facilitate spread of conspiracy theories
- An increasing skeptical citizenry
- Do not trust the government, journalists & professionals
- Everyone has their own truth-tellers
- Questions of where to look, what to focus on and who to trust are ones that we increasingly seek to answer for ourselves, without the help of intermediaries
- Charge of bias → not my perspective

- Value-driven Mindset

- Post-truth society: emotion > fact

Predisposition/ value takes over reality check

(立場先行；雄辯勝事實)

- Endorse like-minded peers' information (撐同溫層資訊)

- Criticize/attack opposing views

- Fox TV Station → criticizes → CNN

- 盲目拒絕相信一切有害自己的資訊；盲目相信接受有利自己的資訊

# **Evaluating Skills for News and Information**

# 1. News and Information Source

- Anonymous source?
- Official source?
- Reliable source?
  - From unfamiliar organization, check their “about us” section to learn more
- A friend?
  - Ask for your friend’s source

# Understanding the background of the news organizations

## Select Credible News Media

- What is a good news media organization?
  - Implement the social functions of news media
  - Professional production and presentation with good taste
    - (Truth, objectivity, fair and justice, not sensational)

# Comparing different information sources

- Traditional newspaper
- TV & radio
- Online media (網媒)
- Citizen journalism
- Bloggers
- Social media and instant messaging apps  
(最多假消息?)
- Others

## **2. Assess the Content and Look for Comprehensiveness & Bias**

- Hying
- Framing

# Comparing the news angles; Separating opinions from facts

- How the story was told in different ways



# Who's point of view?

- What is the argument? What is the evidence?

# The public opinion poll

## Who conducts the poll?

- Government
- Media
- Interest groups/  
pressure groups
- Business organizations
- Academics
- Research centers

## How to evaluate it?

- The name of the sponsor/ the name of the researcher
- Purpose of the study
- Dates of fieldwork
- Universe or population to which the results of the survey are projected
- Method by which the sample was selected
- Sample size
- Response rate of the survey
- Precision of the findings; estimates of sampling error

# 3. Seeing is not Believing

- (photo: Annie Lab)



# Verifying the photos

Online tools that help to verify the authenticity of a photo:

- TinEye

<https://tineye.com/>

- Google Search by Image

- How to Use Google Reverse Image Search to Fact Check Images

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5e9wTdAulA>

- InVid – video verification

# Live broadcasting

- Live streaming on social media, TV and websites

# 4. Sharing

- What is the source?
- If it is marked as “fact checked,” is there any supporting evidence?
- If it is stated as “reported by news media” (新聞有報), any news link? You should check the official news site.
- If there is a link provided, check the link. The information may come from a content farm or unknown website.

# The Importance of Fact Check

## Fact-checking Centers:

- International Fact-checking Network
- Africa Check
- Taiwan Factcheck Centre
- HKU: Annie Lab (Bookmarks on Coronavirus Misinformation)
- Kau Yim ( (求驗傳媒)
- HKBU FactCheck Service (浸大事實查核中心)
- Factcheck Lab (事實查核實驗室)

# Tips for spotting false news (by Facebook)

- Be skeptical of headlines
- Look closely at the URL
- Investigate the source
- Watch for unusual formatting
- Consider the photos
- Inspect the dates
- Check the evidence
- Look at other reports
- Is the story a joke?
- Some stories are intentionally false



# **Mindsets and Information Processing**

Why you think you're right, even when  
you're wrong?

Soldier mindset VS Scout mindset

- **Combat Soldiers:**
  - Regardless of the time and place
  - Their adrenaline is elevated
  - Their actions stem from your deeply ingrained reflexes
  - Reflexes that are rooted in a need to protect themselves and their side, and to defeat the enemy

- Scouts:
  - Their job is not to attack or defend
  - It is to understand
  - They are the people going out, mapping the terrain, identifying potential obstacles
  - Wants to know what is really out there as accurately as possible

# Motivated Reasoning: Combat Soldier Mindset

- A phenomenon in which our unconscious motivations, desires and fears shape the way we interpret information.
- Some pieces of information feel like our allies
  - we want them to win; we want to defend them
- Other information are the enemy
  - We want to shoot them down

# Scout Mindset

- The drive not to make one idea win and another lose
- Attempt to see the facts and evidence as objectively as you can
- To see what is there as honestly and accurately as you can even if it is not pretty, convenient or pleasant
- To cut through one's own prejudices, biases and motivations
- They are less likely to say that someone who changes his mind seems weak
- Their self-worth as a person isn't tied to how right or wrong they are about any particular topic

# If we really want to improve our judgment as individual ...

## To use scout mindset

- To learn how to feel proud instead of ashamed when we notice we might have been wrong about something
- To learn how to feel intrigued instead of defensive when we encounter some information that contradicts our beliefs
- What do you most yearn for?
  - To defend your own beliefs or to see the world as clearly as you possibly can?

# **Teach Kids to Evaluate Informtaion**



# Awareness of Misinformation

- Scotland: National Literacy Trust
  - Primary pupils were twice as likely not to be aware of fake news as secondary students
  - They may “believe everything without questioning it.”
  - Children lack confidence in their ability to identify fake news

# Define Misinformation

- Explain that 'fake news' is news that is totally or partly made up.
  - It's not news that they disagree with
- Disinformation
- Misinformation

# Where Does the Misinformation Come from?

Promote healthy skepticism, not unhealthy  
cynicism:

- YouTube
- WhatsApp
- Gaming sites
- Advertising
- Instagram

# Consider the Source

- Teach them about reliable news sources
- Explain reliable news sources are outlets that employ experienced journalists, make an effort to verify information, and is independent
- Encourage them to value and support quality journalism
- Should not trust anonymous source
- Encourage them to use alternative sources
- Look at dates

# Encourage Investigation

- Maressa Brown:
  - “Where am I getting this news from?”
  - “What is the original source?”
  - “Who say this” (investigate the author)
- Compare multiple sources to cross-reference
- Alert them that a post on social media site has thousands of likes does not mean it is offering reliable information; **popularity is not equal to reliability**

# Beware of the Headlines

- What kind of emotion the headline gives you?
  - scared, panic, angry, sad, exciting, ecstatic, sympathetic
- Attractive headlines?
- What kind of action suggested to take?
- Read the whole story, not just the headline

# Sort Fact from Opinion

- Learn to spot clickbait
- Read the article, not just the headline
- Does something sound ridiculous?

# Compare News Angles

- Read different media
- Find what else is being said about the topic



# Check Photos

- See is not believing
- Fake photo, fake video
- Be aware of live broadcasting

# Be Cautious about Sharing

- Check how reliable the information is before they share the message
- Encourage the kids to reflect on their motive of sharing
- Consider the consequence of sharing
- Be aware of echo chamber effect

# Teach the students what to do when they see falsehoods shared online

- Don't pass it
- Try to fact-check
- Visit reliable fact-check sites
- Ask your teachers or parents

# Learn through Practice

- Through a case of fake news or misinformation to discuss the impact of fake news with the students
- Ask the students to find cases of fake news and analyze them
- Ask them to interview their parents about fake news
- Encourage the students to talk about what they are doing and seeing online

# Resources Online

- Fake news resources, teaching kids news  
<https://teachingkidsnews.com/fakenews>
- 傳媒素養教育資源網  
<https://mlearn.moe.gov.tw/>

*Thank you!*

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