Deconstructing social and digital media

Remember these guys?

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Deconstructing social and digital media

Yes, it is a press, certainly, but ... a spring of truth shall flow from it: Like a new star it shall scatter the darkness of ignorance ...

—JOHANNES GUTENBERG

Deconstructing social and digital media

A squirrel dying in front of your house may be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa.

—MARK ZUCKERBERG
He gets on TV, ‘Pull your pants up black people, I was on TV in the ’80s! I can talk down to you because I had a successful sitcom!’ Yeah, but you rape women, Bill Cosby, so turn the crazy down a couple notches.”

− COMEDIAN HANNIBAL BURRESS, TROCADERO CLUB, OCT. 16

Digital media amp up the power of information

Alert Me

Connect Me

Divert Me

Alerts

9:47 p.m.
White House spokesman

10:24 p.m.
Former chief of staff of defense secretary

Diverts

PAPER

BREAK THE INTERNET

KIM KARDASHIAN

Alerts

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BREAK THE INTERNET

KIM KARDASHIAN
Connects

Eric, You Can Help Stop Ebola
Donate to organizations working in West Africa so they can save lives and stop the outbreak.

Learn More  Donate Now

NEXT WEEK

- Final lecture – including a live TV deconstruction
- Last recitation. Final essays are due. We'll review the exam and preview the final

Wanted
Best News Literacy final essay

REWARD
One semester’s in-state tuition (about $2,800)

The essay topic has been posted on Blackboard. Your score represents 15% of your final grade.
**The Electronic Wasteland**

What can you conclude?

**Preparing for the final exam:**
This online exercise is the best way to study

[Image of a set of directions that take you to an online exercise]

This set of directions is in the "Reading Assignments" tab that takes you to our CourseLoad™ eReader. It's not a graded assignment, but it will prepare you for the final exam. You'll find two broken links ("Keep It Simple" and "Make It Look Good"). Just skip to the next exercises.

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### Last week’s Quick Quiz

1. **FALSE:** Background music mixed into a TV news report in the editing process has no effect on the reliability and fairness of the report. But …

2. If you get all your news from TV, you’re likely to miss stories that lack strong visuals, complex stories: i.e. Supreme Court, Policy issues, certain kinds of international story, like the Boko Haram kidnappings.

### Your questions and comments …

- “Why do news outlets put people that seem random and seem as if they do not know what they are talking about in their live broadcasts …?” — Taylor Riley

- “Pictures then audio then television. What's next?” — Tom Wimmers

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### After this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Teach a peer or relative at least three ways to test the reliability of news that comes via social media.

2. Explain how social media is a cognitive dissonance “enabler” and can amplify confirmation biases.

3. Explain how anonymity contributes to the crisis of authenticity in social media.

4. Articulate both the strengths and weaknesses of social media as a source of reliable information.

5. Explain the ethical news consumer’s role as a news publisher, and the burdens that accompany that role.
On the web, you contribute news

The rise of crowdsourced news sites

The power to alert, divert and connect is in your hands

Social media also amplify disinformation

“Facebook found truth astir on earth and gave it wings; but untruth was also abroad, and it was supplied with a double pair of wings.”
The Power of Disinformation

Colbert foxbot

Sometimes, the crowd gets it wrong . . .
Challenges for empowered consumers in the digital age

- Speed versus accuracy
- Information overload
- Authenticity
- Blurring of lines
- Confirmation Bias

DIGITAL AGE CHALLENGES

Speed vs. Accuracy
(aka Fast & Furious)

The Associated Press quoted a fake Vin Diesel Instagram account in an obit for actor Paul Walker:

In a Dec. 1 obituary for Paul Walker, The Associated Press reported erroneously that Walker’s “Fast & Furious” co-star Vin Diesel reacted to Walker’s death in a message on Instagram.

The account that was quoted as a fake and does not represent Diesel, said his publicist. Diesel has since posted a message on his Facebook page, verified by the publicist, honoring Walker “as the brother you were, on and off screen.”

DIGITAL AGE CHALLENGES

Information overload

Digital Junkie.mp4
Authenticity

DIGITAL AGE CHALLENGES

Blurring of lines

Find the journalism neighborhood on BuzzFeed

• Longoriaball.mp4
Confirmation bias

DIGITAL AGE CHALLENGES

How to pop the bubble: Search “incognito”

Open an incognito window

1. Click the Chrome menu \( \text{Alt} \) on the browser toolbar.
2. Select New incognito window.
3. A new window will open with the incognito icon \( \text{Alt} \) in the corner. You can continue browsing as normal in the other window.

You can also use the keyboard shortcuts \( \text{Ctrl+Shift+N} \) (Windows, Linux, and Chrome OS) and \( \text{Command+Shift+N} \) (Mac) to open an incognito window.

Windows 8 users: To switch between windows, click the window switcher \( \text{Alt} \) on the top right corner.

But active searches are safer than passive newsfeeds, right?

“The Filter Bubble” by Eli Pariser
How do we know what to trust?

Key Lesson

Rank ≠ Reliability

The wisdom of crowds

How does it work?
The crowd contributes "work, money, knowledge and/or experience" in return for "social recognition, self-esteem or the development of individual skills."
Watch for tags, warnings, and captions...

...which can help you spot problems in articles.

Due diligence

Transparency, Wikipedia style

How do we begin to navigate the online maze?

Verification

Independence

Accountability

Evaluating websites: \(\text{VIA}\)

- Articles provide evidence, reliable sources and transparency.
- Dates for page creation and content updates are provided.
- Links are working (don’t lead to dead/outdated pages).
- Information on the page is not out of date.
Evaluating websites: VLA

- Information is independent and verifiable.
- Multiple sources are cited, ideally with a variety of viewpoints.
- Links out to reputable, independent or authoritative sites.
- News and opinion are clearly labeled.

Evaluating websites: VLA

- The person/organization providing information is INDEPENDENT, informed and knowledgeable.
- By virtue of experience, data collection, observation, training, credentials or access, the website’s publishers know what they are talking about.

Evaluating websites: VLA

- “About Us” is easily found, and with robust information about funding, ownership, contact numbers for corrections, etc.
- If not, do a search at whois.com to find the site’s owner.

Look at the “About Us” page

FAIR
Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting

What’s FAIR?

FAIR, the national media watch group, has been offering well-documented criticism of media bias and censorship since 1986. We work to invigorate the First Amendment by advocating for greater diversity in the press and by scrutinizing media practices that marginalize public interest, minority and dissenting viewpoints. As an anti-censorship organization, we expose neglected news stories and defend working journalists when they are muzzled. As a progressive group, FAIR believes that structural reform is ultimately needed to break up the dominant media conglomerates, establish independent public broadcasting and promote strong non-profit sources of information.
Can **anyone** register a URL at these top-level domains?

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Accountability?
It's good for your health

Californiabenefitexchange.com

Accountability?
It's good for your health

Coveredca.com
How do you know?  
WAYS TO FIGURE OUT IF IT'S A HOAX

Check Snopes

How do you know?  
EXPERTS HELP SEPARATE FACT FROM FICTION

Navigating social media

How do you know?  
JUST INCLUDE “HOAX” IN YOUR SEARCH

11/25/2014
Does this account really belong to Pope Francis?

Beware Twitter bots!

1. The **bigger** the story, the more fakes and hoaxes there will be.
2. Fake Twitter accounts often **sub** a “0” for a zero or a “1” for the “l” in the real name of a person or organization.
3. Beware tweets from the person making news themselves. Hoaxers target **news makers**.
4. Check the **bio** on that Twitter handle. Are there troubling typos or poor grammar?
5. If a public personality’s account doesn’t have Twitter’s official **“checkmark,”** be extra-cautious.
Information forensics checklist

- Bio
- Numbers (tweets, followers, retweets)
- Language
- Location
- Evidence (i.e. photos)
- Timing

Tweet to verify: will they tweet back evidence?

Social media do’s and don’ts

- Don’t trust strangers (especially those with candy)
- Look for corroboration
- Build a network of reliable sources, based on their history

YOU can harness the power of reliable information and defeat the Goblin of Disinformation

“With great power comes great responsibility.” — UNCLE BEN PARKER

Don’t let the speed of information flow dictate your pace
The **big** lessons

- Anonymity weakens authenticity
- Rank does not equal reliability
- Popularity does not equal reliability
- **VIA** and **IMVAIN** help you spot hoaxes
- Think critically at your own pace. The rush to judgment is a weakness of social media.