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# You Deserve the Truth: Helping students understand the causes and consequences of fake news

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# You Deserve the Truth:

Helping Students  
Understand the Causes  
and Consequences of  
Fake News

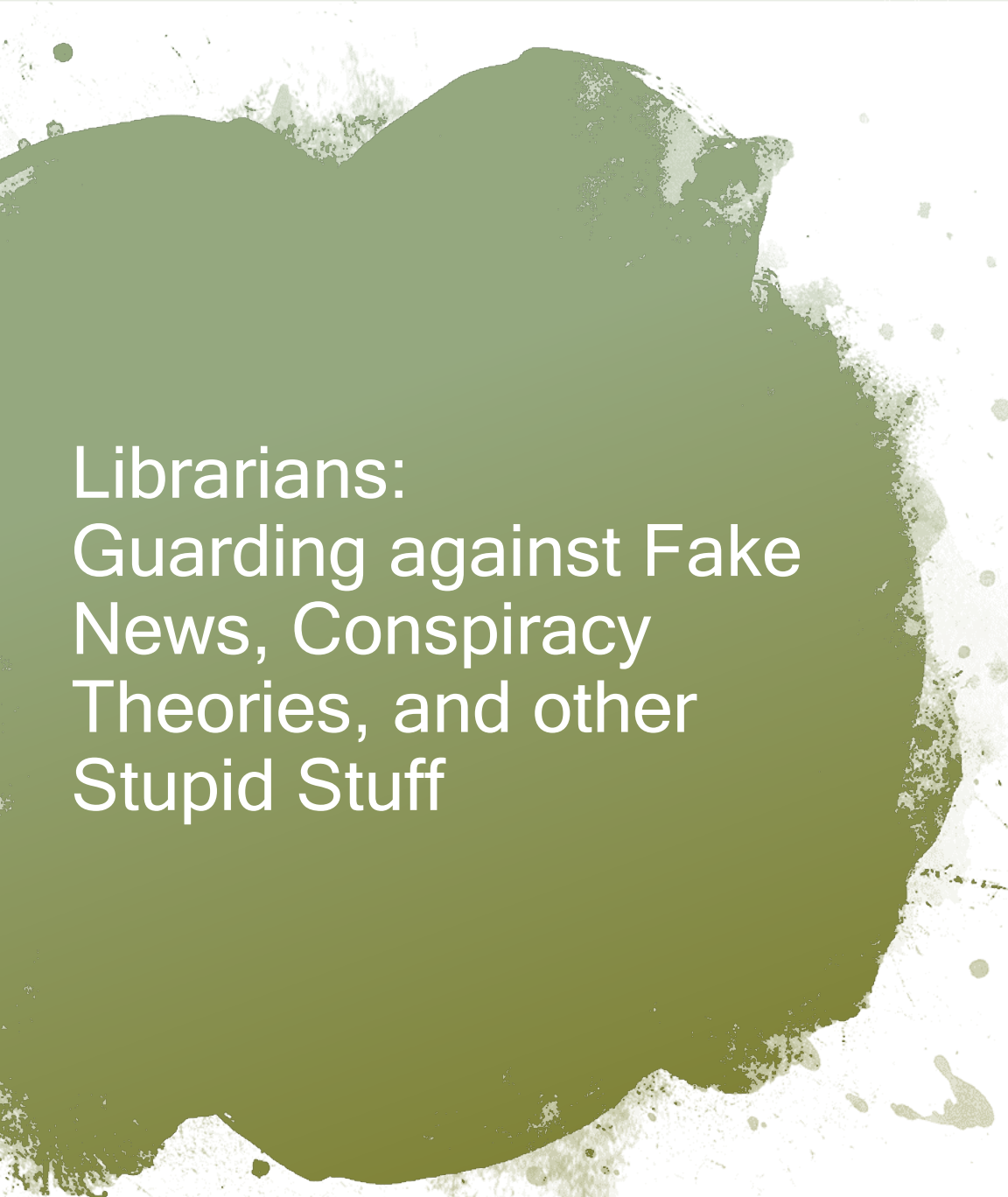
Ngairé Smith, Haywood Community College - Clyde, NC

Heather Cyre, University of Washington Bothell - Bothell, WA



# Before We Begin...





## Librarians: Guarding against Fake News, Conspiracy Theories, and other Stupid Stuff

- Guarding against the spread of false and inflammatory information is a core principle of librarianship
- Our mission is to gather and make available the best information. If we do not teach our students how to identify good information, we are failing.



# Students: Fake News and Vulnerability

- Experience news without traditional gatekeepers
  - Social media
    - encourage sharing without reading
  - Clickbait headlines
  - Accustomed to skimming and clicking
  - Many embrace news if it aligns with their beliefs
- Unique stage of life
  - Voting
  - Employment
  - Housing communities
  - Encountering diverse populations

# Fake News Workshop

Formatted for 90 minutes.  
Additional activities listed at the  
end of this presentation.



# Workshop Learning Outcomes

Identify

Identify the qualities of fake news

Describe

Describe how fake news can influence real world events

Create

Create strategies for preventing the spread of fake news

# Activity 1: Fake News Examples



Poster  
Creation

- Write a definition of fake news
- Think of one example
  - How did you find out about this example?
  - How did you know it was fake?
- What is fake news not?



# Fake News Definition

Fake news is information that is clearly and demonstrably fabricated and that has been packaged and distributed to appear as legitimate news.

This narrow definition seeks to distinguish fake news from other types of misleading information by clarifying that the former is patently false and was created and presented in a way meant to deceive consumers into thinking it is real.

Fake news refers to a specific piece of information; it does not refer to any particular type of news outlet, individual, or other actor.

More broadly:  
Fake news has proliferated to the point where one definition does not cover its many forms.

There are four broad categories of fake news<sup>1</sup>

- **CATEGORY 1:** Fake, false, or regularly misleading websites that are shared on Facebook and social media. Websites may rely on outrage created by distorted headlines and decontextualized or dubious information in order to generate likes, shares, and profits.
- **CATEGORY 2:** Websites that may circulate misleading and/or potentially unreliable information
- **CATEGORY 3:** Websites which sometimes use clickbait-y headlines and social media descriptions
- **CATEGORY 4:** Satire/comedy sites, which can offer important critical commentary on politics and society, but have the potential to be shared as actual/literal news

1. Melissa Zimdars, assistant professor of Communication and Media at Merrimack College.

# Fake News

## What is it?

- Created using false or misleading information
- Intended to deceive
- Driven by content mills
- Revenue created by clicks/shares/product sales
- Created to inflame emotion
- May advance a political agenda

## What is it NOT?

- Shallow or repetitive reporting
- Errors made in reputable publications
- Stories that you do not agree with



# Fake News Through History

A few select examples, or we would be here  
all day.



# Older Than America

- 1475: Anti-Semitic “blood libel” fever in Trent, Italy
- 1755: Supernatural forces responsible for the Lisbon earthquake
- 1761: Wrongful torture & execution of Jean Calas, anti-Catholicism in Toulouse, France
- 1782: *Independent Chronicle* article describes atrocities by Indians at behest of King George III
- 1835: Series of articles in *The Sun* spurs Great Moon Hoax
- 1890s: Articles in the *Morning Journal* used to spark the Spanish-American War

# Activity 2: Fake News In History

(Politico article)

01

## Group 1

- Who tried to stop the spread of fake news?
- Why was this not successful?

02

## Group 2

- Who were the targets?
- What happened to them?

03

## Group 3

- How could the outcome have been prevented?

04

## Group 4

- Can you think of other examples of fake news in history?

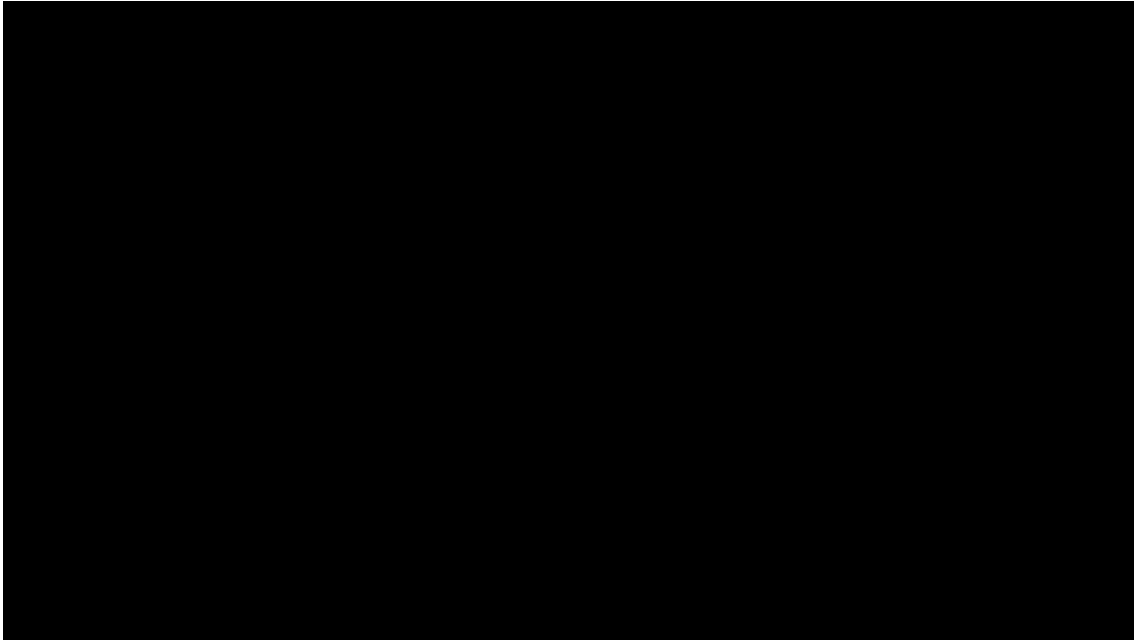
## Present Day

# Pizzagate: 2016

- Russian operatives hack John Podesta's emails, give them to Wikileaks
- Online message boards try to "decode" emails
- Pizza is "deciphered" as meaning child sex trafficking
- Rumors on 8Chan & Reddit get picked up by a Facebook user from Joplin, Mo whose post goes viral
- Automated accounts spread the story through Twitter, Facebook, message boards
- "Citizen investigators" find out that Democratic operative David Brock had dated the owner of a DC pizza place, Comet Ping Pong
- October 29: Infowars hosted a Pizzagate show
- Comet Ping Pong and owner Jame Alefantis receive threats
- Edgar Welch drives from Salisbury, NC to D.C. to investigate
- Edgar Welch enters Comet Ping Pong, carrying an AR15, searching for evidence, fires weapon

# Activity 3: Pizzagate and Real World Consequences

- Watch Video



<https://youtu.be/192XFY01wk0>

- 3 Minute Reflection
  - Why did people believe this false story?
  - How did these rumors spread so far and fast?
  - Who is responsible?
  - What would you have done instead?



# Fake News Creators

Yep, people really create this stuff





# Who Creates It?

- National Report
- News Punch
- News Examiner
- World News Daily Report
- Huzlers
- ABCNEWS.COM.CO
- The US Patriot
- Empire News
- Infowars

For a more complete list, see [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)

# Who Creates It: Example

- Channel One News

[Fake News on Facebook](#)



# Peer-to-Peer Reflection: Would you create fake news?

Why did young people in Macedonia  
create fake news during the 2016  
election?

Would you do it? What if it only  
affected another country?

Why do you think the USA is so  
susceptible to the proliferation of  
fake news?

The image is a screenshot of the BuzzFeed News website. At the top, the BuzzFeed NEWS logo is displayed in red and black. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for News, Videos, Quizzes, Tasty, DIY, and More, along with a search icon and a user profile icon. A red banner is visible below the navigation bar. The main content area features a row of image thumbnails. Below this, a 'TOP POST' section highlights an article with 393,205 views. The article title is 'How Teens In The Balkans Are Duping Trump Supporters With Fake News'. The sub-headline reads: 'BuzzFeed News identified more than 100 pro-Trump websites being run from a single town in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.' The article is dated 'posted on Nov 3, 2016, at 8:02 pm'. Below the article title are two author profiles: Craig Silverman, BuzzFeed Founding Editor, Canada, and Lawrence Alexander, BuzzFeed Contributor. A row of social media sharing icons (Facebook, Email, Pinterest, Twitter, Tumblr, and Print) is located below the authors. At the bottom of the article is a map of Macedonia with various cities and regions labeled, including Tetovo, Kumanovo, and Skopje. To the right of the main article is a sidebar with the BuzzFeed NEWS logo and a section titled 'In The News Today'. This section contains a list of news items: 'From "text to vote" scams to paper ballot schemes: here's 4Chan's plan to cause chaos and suppress the vote tomorrow', 'The entire globe has had its eye on the US during election season. How's the world been affected — and vice versa?', 'Janet Reno, the first woman to serve as US attorney general, has died at 78. She was nominated by Bill Clinton in 1993.', and 'Beyoncé showed up at 30 Rock to watch Solange perform on SNL this weekend, and displayed all of the sister goals'. At the bottom of the sidebar is a button that says 'Download the BuzzFeed News app'. Below the sidebar is another BuzzFeed NEWS logo and a small map of the United States with numbers indicating viewer counts in different states.

# Be a Savvy Information Consumer

Because knowing is half the  
battle





# Consume Local News

- What's going on in your neighborhood, school, community center?
  - Read your local newspaper
  - Listen to local radio
- Know your local government:
  - State supreme court, state legislature, city/county officials, school board members
- Read Opposing Views
- Watch PBS NewsHour
- Read / listen to NPR News & local NPR station
- Read editorial pages of newspapers



# Check Your Biases

[Project Implicit Bias Test](#)  
(Harvard University)

[The Implicit Association Test](#)  
(University of Washington)

Read / Listen to *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*

- [Amazon](#)
- Your Library

## Fact Check

Use the checklist on the following slide

[Self-check the news](#)  
Local NPR station

# Spot Fake News

- Consider the source
- Check the author
- Check the date
- Check your biases
- Read beyond headline
- Check for supporting sources
- Is it a joke?
- Ask the experts
  - Librarians, [Snopes.com](https://www.snopes.com), [FactCheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org)

## HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

**CONSIDER THE SOURCE**  
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

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

**CHECK THE AUTHOR**  
Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

**SUPPORTING SOURCES?**  
Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.

**CHECK THE DATE**  
Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.

**IS IT A JOKE?**  
If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

**CHECK YOUR BIASES**  
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

**ASK THE EXPERTS**  
Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

**IFLA**  
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions  
www.ifla.org



# Don't be a Facebook Fool: Think before you share.

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter make sharing very easy (too easy!).

Before you share a story, image, or piece of information, consider:

- Where did it come from?
- Is there any proof that it's true/real?
- If you Google it, what comes up?

Don't share something because you want it to be true.

This is one of the best things I have seen in a while. They use the same pink dye that they use on bank notes. This makes the Ivory unsellable and it can't be consumed. (the animals are not harmed and it is saving their lives)



laurennohill:

sonoanthony:

Yes my babies  save them

Yes yes yes please save my loves. Please please do this to all of them

# Activity 4: Group Discussion



# Resources for Students

More tips, tricks, and tools



Fact Checkers

FactCheck.org

PolitiFact

Snopes.com

Washington Post Fact Checker

Hoaxy

U.S. Government Info

CQ.com

CQ Researcher

ProQuest Congressional

Congressional Quarterly Weekly  
Report

Browser Plug-ins

BS Detector (Chrome, Firefox,  
Safari)

Fake News Alert (Chrome)

This is Fake (Chrome, for  
Facebook feed)

Library Databases

Access World News

LexisNexis Academic

ProQuest Newsstand

Library Resources

Contact your Librarian

Chat with a Librarian 24/7

Research Guides



# The End

For 90-minute student workshop

# Resources for Educators

Librarians, Instructors, Writing Centers, etc.



# Additional Readings

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# Additional Activities

- Factitious Game by [JoLT and AU Game Lab](#)
- Framing Memes Activity from [University of Wyoming](#)
- A “Backtrack Journal” Exercise from [Medium / Pace University](#) graduate course in Multiplatform Communications
- Based on “An Exercise to Sift for Sources Amid a Blitz of Fake News” from [Dot Earth / New York Times](#)



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# The End

For real.

Questions?

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