

How false news can spread

by Noah Tavlin

VOCABULARY

1. Study the sentences and complete the definitions below with the underlined adjectives.

- We should not tolerate this biased media coverage.
- The newspaper has been accused of publishing sensationalist stories of the murders.
- The report presented fabricated evidence which was really ridiculous.
- There are so many pseudoscientific beliefs, for example astrology.
- Judges need to be impartial to make objective decisions.

- a) **pseudoscientific** : falsely or mistakenly claimed or regarded as being based on scientific method
- b) **fabricated** : something false which is invented or produced in order to deceive someone
- c) **biased** : preferring one person, thing, or idea to another in a way that is unfair
- d) **impartial** : not connected to or influenced by one particular person or group
- e) **sensationalist** : presenting events in a way that makes them seem as exciting or shocking as possible

2. Discuss the following questions?

- How do you keep up with the news?
- Do you trust the information you get?
Are media in your country biased?
- How can you know that the information you've read/heard is not fabricated?
- What do you know about fake news?



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3. Read the text below and answer the questions below.

Circular reporting can occur when:

" (...) publication A publishes misinformation, publication B reprints it, and publication A then cites B as the source for the information. It's also considered a form of circular reporting when multiple publications report on the same initial piece of false information, which then appears to another author as having been verified by multiple sources."

1. In your own words, what is circular reporting?
2. How do you think it can be avoided?
3. How can it affect our everyday lives?

VIDEO & DISCUSSION

4. Before watching the video, explain what a quote attributed to Mark Twain means.

*"A lie can travel half way around the world
while the truth is putting on its shoes."*

5. Watch the video and answer the questions.

- What examples of circular reporting does the speaker mention?
 - a pseudoscientific paper published in 1998 arguing that routine vaccination of children causes autism which inspired an entire anti-vaccination movement
 - a joke article in the reputable British Medical Journal entitled "Energy Expenditure in Adolescents Playing New Generation Computer Games"
- How do wikis contribute to circular reporting?
 - As more writers come to rely on such pages for quick information, an unverified fact in a wiki page can make its way into a published article that may later be added as a citation for the very same wiki information, making it much harder to debunk.
- What should we do to avoid circular reporting according to the video?
 - Avoiding sensationalist media, searching for criticisms of suspicious information, and tracing the original source of a report can help slow down a lie, giving the truth more time to put on its shoes.
- Have you seen people sharing fake news on social media pages? What types of behaviors did you notice when it happened?
- What impact do you think fake news has had on you, or on people in your life?
- What impact do you think fake news sites have on elections?

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ADDITIONAL TASK

Give your students these 4 pieces of news and ask them which of them are true (news no. 1 and no. 4) and which are fake (news no. 2 and no. 3)

NEWS NO. 1



MARKET INSIDER with PATTI DOMM

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Berkeley Lovelace Jr. | @BerkeleyJr

Published 9:02 AM ET Mon, 12 Dec 2016 | Updated 12:32 PM ET Tue, 13 Dec 2016



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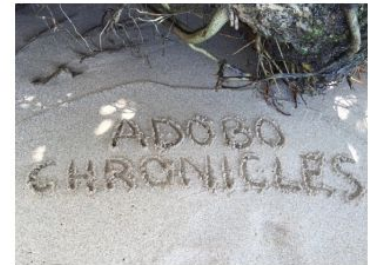
G7 summit meeting in Germany, 2015

LOS ANGELES, California (*The Adobo Chronicles*) – Technology has definitely caught up with America's new generation of teenagers. Or is it the other way around?

Today, the Field Poll released a new nationwide opinion survey involving 5,000 Americans throughout the country – aged 13 to 19 – asking them one open-ended question: "What do you know about the

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VIEWS

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NEWS NO. 3

The screenshot shows a Twitter interface. At the top, there are navigation options: Home, Moments, Search Twitter, and a login link. The main content is a tweet from 'Burrard St. Journal' (@BurrardStreetJ) posted on February 24, 2017, at 6:52 PM. The tweet text reads: 'Canada consider #JustinBieber as new ambassador to #USA. burrardstreetjournal.com /canada-consider ... #canada #TrumpLeaks #cdnpoli #trudeau'. Below the text is a photograph of Justin Bieber shaking hands with Donald Trump in front of Canadian and American flags. The tweet has one like and one retweet. Below the tweet is a reply from Jason Arruda (@Mjasonaruda) who says: '@BurrardStreetJ @FailMuchLive correction, Canadian Government considers Justin beiber for the position. IMO... stupid move if this is true'. The background of the page shows a cityscape at night.

NEWS NO. 4

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NEWS

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Indonesian man's body found inside python - police

29 March 2017 | Asia

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A missing Indonesian man was found dead inside the body of a python, according to local police.

Akbar went missing on Sunday on the island of Sulawesi, after leaving to harvest palm oil.

In the search for the 25-year-old, police told BBC Indonesian that they had found a