Trust & Transparency

MOOC Week 4
Principles & Projects
Agenda

• Overview of the principles of trust and transparency.
• The dynamics of trust in today’s environment.
• A look at key projects focused on trust and transparency.
Principles

1. Never add anything that was not there.

2. Never deceive the audience.

3. Be transparent about your methods and motives.

4. Rely on your own original reporting.

5. Exercise humility.

Source: The Elements of Journalism
“Transparency is telling people how we got the story ... reporting why we included what we did. What was left out and why, who our sources are.”

–Los Angeles Times editor in “Newsrooms and Transparency in the Digital Age” by Kalyani Chadha & Michael Koliska
“It’s a challenge to figure out the veracity of the information, where it came from, what the point of view is, or how it was put together.” That creates more of an imperative for news organizations to pull back the curtain to explain to readers how they report and write stories. “It becomes incumbent upon organizations—that are trying to improve our lower-d democracy—to open up a window into how they do the work they do.”

–Melody Kramer, Wikimedia Foundation/Poynter Institute
Pros & Cons Today

• Platforms have changed the direct relationship news organizations had with their audience.

• The press is under attack from other institutions, which creates conflict for the public.

• Rise of a new breed of partisan online media can create a “I trust it because I agree with it” scenario.

• Individual journalists can build their own brands and connect directly with the audience.

• The web and online world makes it easier to cite sources, show our work.

• It also makes it easier to collaborate with people and build a connection.

• There are new opportunities to use technology to determine trustworthy content and to elevate it.
The Trust Project

News with integrity

We all think we can tell the difference between opinion, advertising and accurate news. But how do we really know?
Out of an initial set of 37, the Trust Project collaborators decided on a core set of eight Trust Indicators to implement first. They are:

- **Best Practices**: What are your standards? Who funds the news outlet? What is the outlet’s mission? Plus commitments to ethics, diverse voices, accuracy, making corrections and other standards.
- **Author/Reporter Expertise**: Who made this? Details about the journalist, including their expertise and other stories they have worked on.
- **Type of Work**: What is this? Labels to distinguish opinion, analysis and advertiser (or sponsored) content from news reports.
- **Citations and References**: For investigative or in-depth stories, access to the sources behind the facts and assertions.
- **Methods**: Also for in-depth stories, information about why reporters chose to pursue a story and how they went about the process.
- **Locally Sourced?**: Lets you know when the story has local origin or expertise. Was the reporting done on the scene, with deep knowledge about the local situation or community?
- **Diverse Voices**: A newsroom’s efforts and commitment to bringing in diverse perspectives. Readers noticed when certain voices, ethnicities, or political persuasions were missing.
- **Actionable Feedback**: A newsroom’s efforts to engage the public’s help in setting coverage priorities, contributing to the reporting process, ensuring accuracy and other areas. Readers want to participate and provide feedback that might alter or expand a story.
## Proposed Indicator (based on workshops)
**HOVER OVER COLOR BAR or CLICK ON BOX FOR DEFINITIONS**

- **Easily accessible:**
  - a) Editorial guidelines
  - b) Company ownership
  - c) Funding sources

- **Ombudsperson**

- **Corrections policy and practices**

- **Mission Statement (Hold power accountable)**

- **Ethics policy/Link to a code of ethics at start of every article**

- **Diversity policy/Link to diversity policy, including on sourcing (voices)**

- **Disclosure of conflicts-of-interest**

- **Links for users to suggest diverse sources (voices)**

- **Author bio linked to byline with details of expertise, history, political affiliation, potential conflicts-of-interest**

- **Describe why author chose this issue to cover**

## Proposed Tools/Features (developed in Trust Project workshops on user needs)

- **User trust rating incorporated into browser extension:**
  1. User builds a trust profile to define algorithm
  2. Surfaces content that likely to appeal
  3. Surfaces opposing views
  4. Filters by demographic and location information to provide different perspectives

- **Tool to identify new sources/voices or topic of interest (see SmartNews, Notify)**

- **Provide new source/topic each day**

- **GPS location app that shows relevant local stories and friends**

- **Tool for user curation:**
  - Allow users to more easily share news and curate comments, comment herself; package her posts; create news summaries

- **Social fact-checking tool**

- **Personalized email to push stories to user based on algorithms, machine learning**

- **Collect international news sources or hot topics**
News credibility is the challenge of our time.

Can we agree on scientific and systematic ways to assess reliable information, and whether they can be applied at scale? Our community-driven approach explores this question through collaboratively-structured definitions and shared results from tests for content credibility.
Helping journalists earn news consumers’ trust

How do people decide what news is trustworthy? And how can journalists influence what users consume and share? This site shares findings from the Trusting News project. Follow our current experiments in real time on our Medium publication.

Journalists are working with our project on ways to stand out in a minefield of misinformation. We want journalists and newsrooms to feel empowered, not hopeless. Our current experiments are based on 8,728 user questionnaires and 81 in-depth interviews, conducted in 2017 by journalists in these newsrooms. We've turned the insights gathered into concrete strategies for newsrooms, and we're testing them now.
Theme: Engage authentically

- Strategy: Interact like a human

Editor's observation: Steal this idea

Newsroom: Fresno Bee
Type of post: Comment Interaction
Followers: 50,000 to 200,000

You can now smash a car window to save an animal free. That news and much more in today's curated morning newsletter.

California law helps dogs, Fresno State professor honored and Fresno's water troubles illustrated – your Morning Scoop

Tony Montero and shame on the fresno bee for making a bold statement as to say "you may now break a window" NO... No you may not! it's not that simple! try reading what that law clearly intells, before you mislead the public.

Tony Martin But you may now smash a window to get an animal out. So they are reporting a new story. Stating facts about it all over the article. And a truthful headline. And you upset because you didn't read the whole thing? Or you upset because it's a headline and did what it was supposed to do and get people to read about it?

Takeaway: Make time to fact-check comments. Prevent false statements from going unchallenged.

Link to original post
As journalists, we get to learn something new about our community every day. #NoCoAsk aims to share that passion, to help better understand the world around us, with you. Learn more: http://noconow.co/2bQ80iv

What are you curious about?

#NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk #NoCoAsk

Takeaway: When you share content, include what about that content provides value to users. Demonstrate your commitment, expertise, values, etc. Also, invite people into your reporting process.

Link to original post
Summary

• The principles remain the same. We are still seeking to build human trust and connection.

• Our new media environment has challenges and opportunities for building trust and being transparent. Journalists must embrace this and work at it.

• New initiatives are working in this area, but journalists must still do the work. There are no shortcuts.

• Confusion and criticism are not reasons to abandon principles.
Best Practices
Agenda

• Showing your work/sharing source material.

• Being transparent about methods and limitations.

• Collaborating with the audience.
Showing Your Work

Investigations

Woman says Roy Moore initiated sexual encounter when she was 14, he was 32

By Stephanie McCrummen, Beth Reinhard and Alice Crites
November 9, 2017  Email the author
Corfman described her story consistently in six interviews with The Post. The Post confirmed that her mother attended a hearing at the courthouse in February 1979 through divorce records. Moore’s office was down the hall from the courtroom.

Neither Corfman nor any of the other women sought out The Post. While reporting a story in Alabama about supporters of Moore’s Senate campaign, a Post reporter heard that Moore allegedly had sought relationships with teenage girls. Over the ensuing three weeks, two Post reporters contacted and interviewed the four women. All were initially reluctant to speak publicly but chose to do so after multiple interviews, saying they thought it was important for people to know about their interactions with Moore. The women say they don’t know one another.

“I have prayed over this,” Corfman says, explaining why she decided to tell her story now. “All I know is that I can’t sit back and let this continue, let him continue without the mask being removed.”

This account is based on interviews with more than 30 people who said they knew Moore between 1977 and 1982, when he served as an assistant district attorney for Etowah County in northern Alabama, where he grew up.
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Takeaways

• The story anticipated and addressed objections.

• It answers key questions: How did you get this story, what is it based on, what are the motivations of your sources?

• It makes it clear what work was performed to test and verify sources and information.
Sharing Source Material

- Link to sources. Credit other outlets.
- Upload original documents to DocumentCloud and link to them.
- Put code on GitHub.
- Embed social content.
How PolitiFact Shows Its Source Material

Greg Abbott claim about border apprehensions, heroin seizures light on factual backup

By W. Gardner Selby on Tuesday, April 24th, 2018 at 4:33 p.m.

Published: Tuesday, April 24th, 2018 at 4:33 p.m.
Researched by: W. Gardner Selby
Edited by: John Intiger
Subjects: Drugs, Immigration

Sources:
- Audio interview of Gov. Greg Abbott by Troy Ware, KRTV, April 9, 2018 (statement about border encroachment on disputed property)
- News story, “Trump signs declaration directing troops to secure border,” The Associated Press, April 5, 2018 (headline from The Houston Chronicle website)
- News story, “Governor says another 1,200 Texas guardsmen headed to border,” San Antonio Express-News, April 9, 2018
- Truth-O-Meter articles, PolitiFact, “Mostly True: Texas governor’s claim about border apprehensions down since 2016,” April 6, 2017
- “Donald Trump’s claims on border security,” April 19, 2017
- Article, “The facts on border apprehensions,” Fox News, April 6, 2018
- Email, Carlos A. Diaz, Southwest Border chief, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, April 19, 2018

Email, Mark A. Patterson, drug intelligence coordinator, Congressional and Public Affairs, Drug Enforcement Administration, April 19, 2018

Greg Abbott claims that as of March 2018, compared with 2017, “there’s been a more than 200 percent increase in the number of people who are apprehended coming across the border. And I’ll tell you this, there’s been a more than 300 percent increase in apprehensions of heroin coming across the border.”

— Gov. Abbott on Monday, April 9th, 2018, in an interview by Troy Ware of San Antonio’s KRTV-11 radio station.
An Inside Look At The Accounts Twitter Has Censored In Countries Around The World

BuzzFeed News has identified more than 1,700 Twitter accounts that have been blocked in at least one country. The list provides an unprecedented glimpse into Twitter’s collaboration with national groups and governments — democratic and authoritarian alike — and provides new details about a surge in blocked accounts in Germany, France, and Turkey.

Posted on January 24, 2018, at 8:01 a.m.

Craig Silverman
BuzzFeed News Media Editor

Jeremy Singer-Vine
BuzzFeed News Reporter
How we got the data

Starting in early October, BuzzFeed News tried to identify as many “withheld” accounts as it could. To do so, we used Twitter’s search interface, its API (its “application programming interface” provided to developers), the Lumen database of removal requests, and other resources.

So far, we’ve found 1,714 users who, based on Twitter’s own API, have been withheld in at least one country. While this represents the most comprehensive list of withheld accounts ever made public, it’s unclear how representative it is of the entire universe of withheld accounts. Twitter at times also withholds specific tweets from certain countries; this data set does not address those.

To start, we seeded a database with users listed in Twitter users’ personal blocklists, such as this one published by @NaziBlocker. Many of the users on these lists are not withheld in any country, however. To broaden our database, we also added usernames mentioned in Lumen’s database of legal complaints and removal requests, accounts we found through manual research, and users listed on “Cemetery of Free Speech,” a website (no longer accessible at the time of publication) that tracks accounts and tweets withheld in Germany.

Then, we fed these lists of users through Twitter’s API, which provides data about each account — including, crucially, an attribute named “withheld_in_countries.” For accounts that were, indeed, withheld in at least one country, we then used Twitter’s API to find all of the users that the account followed, and then checked whether any of those accounts had been withheld.

We continued this process until we could find no more withheld users. In all, we examined nearly 800,000 accounts.

Our database of withheld users is, unavoidably, incomplete. Some withheld accounts, for instance, may have been deactivated (by Twitter or the user) or unwithheld before we could identify them. And our approach to finding accounts likely has its own blind spots.

We encourage readers to send us examples of users we may have missed. To submit an example, click here.
Collaborating With The Audience

Politics

Missing from Trump’s list of charitable giving: His own personal cash
David Fahrenthold
@Fahrenthold

UPDATED: list of charities holding galas at @realDonaldTrump's Mar-a-Lago next yr. Seven have gone from yes to no.

David Fahrenthold
@Fahrenthold

I've now called 313 charities in my search for proof @realDonaldTrump gives his own money away. Not much luck lately

5:35 PM - Sep 2, 2016

3,179 Retweets  5,938 Likes
FAHRENBLOMHD: What I wanted to do with this was give people a way to see what I did. I’m not trying to conceal anything about what I’ve tried and I’m open to people suggestions. If people write to me and say I’m a hack and you missed this thing, I always say “tell me more” and I’ll put it on my list and I’ll call those people. And I’ve gotten a lot of tips even from people who started out being really hostile. If Trump has a suggestion of where I should look, I’ll look. I just want to be transparent about why I called these groups and who I called and what I learned. I’m hoping that people who come in with that degree of distrust see that and appreciate it.

Source: “How one Washington Post reporter uses pen and paper to make his tracking of Trump get noticed,” Nieman Journalism Lab
Fahrenthold’s prize-winning reporting was a follow-the-money tale that combined dogged reporting — he called 450 charitable organizations to ask them whether Trump had ever donated money — with the creative use of social media, especially Twitter, to “crowdsource” the public’s collective knowledge of people and events.

In the process, Post editor Martin Baron said, Fahrenthold, 39, “reimagined” investigative reporting. Traditionally, Baron said, reporters have kept their work “secret and guarded” until they have developed enough information to publish. Fahrenthold instead shared his progress on stories via Twitter and openly asked readers for tips and information that guided his work. Baron noted that this process now has a name: “the Fahrenthold method.”
Reasons **Not** To Do A Public Call Out

- It could turn out to be false.
- It could put sources or other people in harm’s way.
- It could compromise people’s privacy.
- It will undo your work by tipping off people or entities to what’s coming.

Credit: Joy Mayer
Summary

• Think about what questions or objections readers/listeners/viewers might have, and work that into your reporting.

• Make it easy for people to see your sources and understand how you got the story.

• Look for places where you can involve the audience by asking for information or sharing your process.