

Library Services

Fake News Friday: Week 3

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NICOLA: Hello welcome to fake news Friday. My name is Nicola. I'm one of the librarians at the Open University. And throughout May we have been doing a series called Fake News Friday, where we look at hints and tips to help you with spotting fake news. And we are using this infographic from IFLA, to help us with that.

Today I'm going to be looking at read beyond and check your biases. My first tip is read beyond. And this is just a reminder to make sure you always read beyond the headline.

So you open an article and you have a look at it. That because sometimes headlines can be misleading or outright false. The text of an article might not be fake at all but the headline makes you think it is.

An example of something like this that I have seen recently is something from a major UK newspaper. And it was being shared quite widely on social media and the headline was Salt banned in chip shops. People were getting really quite incensed about this, they weren't allowed to have salt with their fish and chips. It was being shared quite a lot, there were lots of comments, lots of likes. But when I actually clicked on it and read through the article, I found out that it wasn't actually true at all.

What had actually happened was a few fish and chip shops in one town in the UK, had signed up to a voluntary scheme whereby they agreed to keep their salt behind the counter and only give it out if customers actually asked for it rather than offering it to everyone. So no salt ban at all. It was actually also an article from 2011.

You can see it was really important that I opened it up, read through it and I saw that this is not true salt has not been banned. So that my first tip.

Tip number two is check your biases. And this one can be quite tricky because what you have to do is not just evaluate what you are reading but you actually have to evaluate yourself. You need to remember that your own biases, so your opinions, your beliefs about certain things. They can impact how much you believe and how able you are to be critical when you are reading a news article.

For example if we think about the general election at the moment there is lots of news out there about the different political parties and the leaders of them and its worth remembering that if you happen to dislike a particular party or politician then if you read a piece of news that makes them look bad your probably more likely to think that it is true because you want them to look bad.

Sometimes we believe stuff because we want to believe it. The same is true with the opposite, so if you particularly like a politician and you see something that makes them look good you are more likely to believe it. You are also more likely to think critically if you read something that makes them look bad.

The idea there is to make sure that you always remember your own biases might be impacting how much you are able to think critically about something.

It's also worth bearing in mind that if you get a lot of news from social media that actually your biases impact how much you actually get to see. The social network sites they filter out what they show you based on what you have liked before and what you tend to enjoy reading. So you are not seeing the whole picture, your not seeing the things that they have decided you don't want to see and you don't know what they have decided you want to see.

If you do tend to get quite a lot of your news from social media then you might want to get a more holistic view by going outside of that and looking and news websites for example.

So that's my tips. I hope you have found them useful and don't forget to join us next week when Manda will be talking about supporting sources and ask the experts. Bye