

After a CNN interviewee erupts in anger, disaster reporting standards come into focus

By Paul Farhi August 30

CNN reporter Rosa Flores may have inadvertently discovered the most passionate media critic to emerge from Hurricane Harvey on Tuesday.

Flores approached the woman, identified only as Danielle, and her young daughter in a Houston shelter and began asking her about the hazards and discomfort they had encountered when the woman unloaded on Flores on live TV:

“She walked through four feet of water to go get them food on the first day,” the woman said, referencing her daughter. “Yeah, that’s a lot of s---. But y’all sitting here, y’all trying to interview people during their worst times. Like, that’s not the smartest thing to do.” (“Sorry,” began Flores.) “Like, people are really breaking down, and y’all sitting here with cameras and microphones trying to ask us, ‘What the f--- is wrong with us?’ (“I’m so sorry. . . .”) And you’re really trying to understand with the microphone still in my face. When she’s shivering cold and my kid’s wet and you still putting a microphone in my face!”

“Sorry,” said Flores, backing away as the woman appeared ready to burst into tears of rage.

Anchor Jim Acosta broke into the tirade. “Rosa Flores, it sounds like you’ve got a very upset family there,” he said. “We’re going to take a break from that.”

Media coverage of disasters can be like that — wild, uncertain, erratic. Stuff happens that wouldn’t happen if the story didn’t sprawl over hundreds of square miles and involve the lives of millions of people. When there’s chaos near and far, it’s hard to know when an ordinary interview will turn into an act of fury.

CNN found out the hard way that disaster reporting requires a different approach. People are vulnerable and hurting; they’ve lost property, perhaps family, and certainly a sense of safety and privacy, says Bruce Shapiro, director of the Dart Center for

Journalism and Trauma, a Columbia University project that focuses on disaster and violence reporting. “A disaster of this scale challenges all of our reporting practices,” he said. “Our day-to-day tool kit isn’t always equal to this.”

It wasn’t clear how Flores approached the woman before their interview or what their pre-interview conversation had been. But Shapiro says reporters need to seek “small gestures of permission” from people in such circumstances. Asking for consent and explaining the purpose of an interview can restore a small measure of control to those who’ve lost much of theirs, he says.

(A CNN spokeswoman, Barbara Levin, responded to a question about the encounter with a statement reading, “The people of Houston are going through a very difficult time. Our hearts go out to this woman and her family. Our reporter handled the situation graciously.”)

While it wasn’t hard to relate to the Houston woman’s pain and distress, sustained news coverage of disasters such as Hurricane Harvey largely has a positive effect. News reporting stimulates government relief efforts and private donations. It also inspires heroic volunteers. Some of the most heartening images of the past few days, in fact, have been those of ordinary citizens employing kayaks and other recreational vessels to rescue people from flooded homes.

News coverage also plays a vital social role in a crisis by providing information that can bind a community together. The ways and means are many: stories about heroism or human interest, warnings about ongoing hazards, weather forecasts, details about relief operations, the location of missing people. Shapiro says some New Orleanians wept when the local paper, the Times-Picayune, distributed its first copies to the battered evacuees at the city’s convention center and Superdome after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Nonetheless, misreporting is a constant feature of natural disasters, too. One of the great media-fed myths of Katrina was that criminality, violence and looting swept New Orleans after the breach of the city’s levees. There were apocalyptic stories about snipers shooting at rescue helicopters, roving gangs indiscriminately killing and raping throughout the flooded city, and the Superdome overflowing with dead bodies.

Almost none of it was true.

Much of the defective reporting stemmed from exaggerated or wholly inaccurate comments from official sources, including the mayor and police chief, said W. Joseph Campbell, the author of “Getting It Wrong: Debunking the Greatest Myths in American Journalism.”

Because official sources are often themselves shaky amid catastrophe, disaster coverage requires extra restraint and circumspection, said Campbell, a communication professor at American University. “It’s an occasion to be more cautious than ever,” he said. “A good rule of thumb might be to restrict yourself only to what you can see.”

Campbell said he hasn’t seen any “outright phony reporting” from Hurricane Harvey — yet. But there might be some of the inadvisable kind. On Tuesday, ABC News reporter Tom Llamas caught some social-media pushback after he tweeted:

"#Breaking: We're witnessing looting right now at a supermarket in the NE part of Houston & police has just discovered a body nearby."

Some pointed out that it might not exactly be "looting" for desperate people to take the only available food in sight. But Llamas went on, tweeting that he had "informed police of the looting," and that Coast Guard and police had responded.

More criticism followed. One website called Llamas's second comment "the worst tweet in history." It questioned Llamas's decision to involve police and then tweet about it. Eventually, Llamas deleted his original tweet and tried to clarify his intent by saying that he was already with police at the time and "mentioned we saw ppl w/faces covered going into a supermarket nearby."

ABC News had no comment; Llamas had no further tweets on the matter.

Paul Farhi is The Washington Post's media reporter. [🐦 Follow @farhip](#)



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Facebook says estimated 10 million saw Russia-linked ads

By MARY CLARE JALONICK

Today



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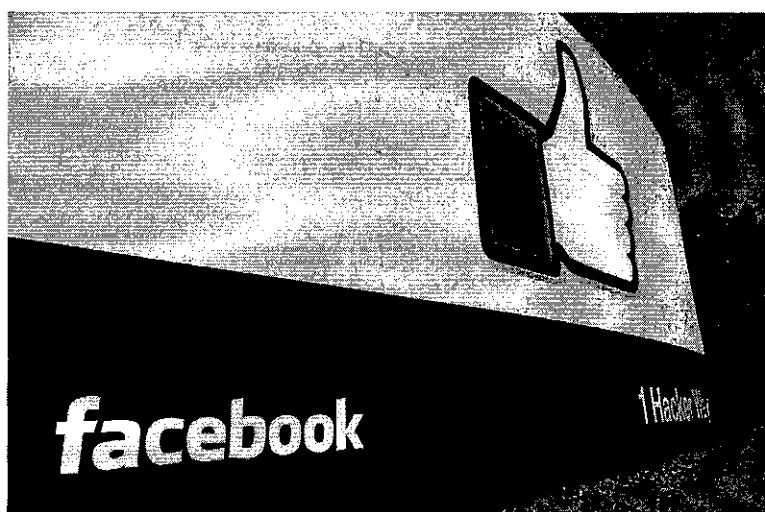
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WASHINGTON (AP) — Facebook says ads that ran on the company's social media platform and have been linked to a Russian internet agency were seen by an estimated 10 million people before and after the 2016 election.

The company turned 3,000 ads over to three congressional committees Monday as part of their investigations into Russian influence in the 2016 election. In a new company blog post, Facebook's Elliot Schrage said the ads appeared to focus on divisive social and political messages, including LGBT issues, immigration and gun rights. In many cases, the ads encouraged people to follow pages on those issues.



Fewer than half of the ads — which ran between 2015 and 2017 — were seen before the election, with 56 percent of them seen after the election. Some of the ads were paid for in Russian currency.

Congressional investigators have recently focused on the spread of false news stories and propaganda on social media and have pressured Facebook, along with Twitter and Google, to release any Russia-linked ads. Facebook's ads were turned over to the House and Senate intelligence committees and the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The company already has given similar material to Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into the Russian meddling.

Facebook said last month that the ads appear to have come from accounts associated with a Russian entity called the Internet Research Agency. The company said it found 450 accounts and about \$100,000 was spent on the ads.

Schrage, Facebook vice president for policy and communications, said in the blog post that the ads included "political messages across the ideological spectrum." He said for 99 percent of the ads, less than \$1,000 was spent.

The company said some of the ads were paid for in Russian currency, but that isn't always a way of identifying suspicious activity. Schrage defended the site's ability to target certain demographic groups, but said "ads containing certain types of targeting will now require additional human review and approval."

The company is also making clear that it takes the right to free speech seriously and will never be able to remove all objectionable content.

"Even when we have taken all steps to control abuse, there will be political and social content that will appear on our platform that people will find objectionable, and that we will find objectionable," Schrage writes.



Another Facebook official, Joel Kaplan, the company's vice president of global policy, said in a blog post Monday morning that the company is planning to hire more than 1,000 people to staff teams that review advertisements globally. Facebook will also update its policies to require better documentation from advertisers who want to run ads related to the U.S. election, including a requirement that the advertisers will have to confirm the business or organization they represent.

Kaplan said the company's policies already prohibit "shocking" content, direct threats and the promotion of

the sale or use of weapons, but said “going forward, we are expanding these policies to prevent ads that use even more subtle expressions of violence.”

Twitter has said it found postings linked to the same Facebook accounts, and the House and Senate intelligence panels have asked both companies, along with Google, to testify publicly in the coming weeks. None of the companies has yet said whether it will accept the invitations.

It is unclear whether the Facebook ads turned over to Congress will eventually be released publicly. Several lawmakers — including Virginia Sen. Mark Warner and California Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrats on the Senate and House intelligence panels — have said they believe the American public should see them.

Schiff said he hopes to release a sampling of the ads at a public hearing with the firms. He said he is committed to making all of these ads public “as soon as possible,” while working with Facebook on privacy considerations.

“We will continue to work with Facebook and other tech companies to determine the full extent of Russia’s use of online platforms, including paid advertising, since what we now know may only scratch the surface,” Schiff said.

Twitter said last week that it had suspended 22 accounts corresponding to the 450 Facebook accounts that were likely operated out of Russia.

Warner criticized Twitter for not sharing more information with Congress, saying the company’s findings were merely “derivative” of Facebook’s work. The company’s presentations to staff last week “showed an enormous lack of understanding from the Twitter team of how serious this issue is, the threat it poses to democratic institutions,” he said.

Stroud, Scott

From: Daniszewski, John
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2017 12:48 PM
To: !All Staff List
Cc: AP Standards
Subject: A Reminder From the Standards Center on Attribution and Use of Anonymous Sources

Colleagues:

AP seeks to be the gold standard of news reliability. To strengthen the trust of our audiences around the world and to meet our own values, we long ago set tough rules on attribution and on the use of anonymous sources.

This is more important than ever with the news media under assault and opinion surveys showing trust in news ebbing.

No one wants news that's built on unnamed, unaccountable sources and facts seemingly pulled from the air. Politicians and members of the public sometimes have cited such journalism as a reason for the fall in trust in the media. A poll in May by the AP-supported Media Insight Project was bleak: only 17 percent of Americans now judge the "news media" as very accurate.

Reporting with loose attribution or anonymous sourcing can be dismissed as fake by the skeptical reader or politician. On the other hand, a report filled with verifiable facts attributed to named and authoritative sources of information is impossible to dispute.

On Attribution

Our standard is that AP news reports must attribute any disputable facts that were not witnessed, gathered or confirmed on our own. In other words, if the information is second-hand -- somebody told us something -- the information should be attributed to named sources in our stories. Being transparent about precisely where the facts or views contained in our report come from is one of the strongest ways to build and maintain trust in AP's journalism.

Attribution should come just before or just after the first reference to the information that is used--in the same sentence.

If in subsequent paragraphs we provide more details from the same source, we should restate the attribution unless it is perfectly clear from the context that we are referring to the previously cited source for the information.

Here is a recent lead about President Donald Trump's abrasive tweets against MSNBC's Mika Brzezinski. Without attribution, it looks like it's just the AP's opinion.

NEW YORK (AP) — If President Donald Trump were anyone else, he'd be fired, or at least reprimanded, for his latest tweets attacking a female TV host.

The writer actually was reporting the reaction of various employment consultants to the tweets, and that became evident in the second paragraph of the story. In a writethru, the attribution was raised to the lead to make the sources for the statement clearer to readers who don't get past the lead.

NEW YORK (AP) — If President Donald Trump were anyone else, he'd be fired, or at least reprimanded, for his latest tweets attacking a female TV host, social media and workplace experts say.

On Anonymous Sources

In a perfect world, all information in the AP report would be attributed to named, on-the-record sources who could be held accountable for the accuracy of the information.

At times, however, there may be a need to use anonymously attributed information in order to tell an important story. This is allowed by AP in carefully defined circumstances: if the information is from a credible source with direct knowledge; if it brings to light important facts that otherwise would remain in the shadows; and if the information can be obtained no other way.

Valuable news often originates from whistle-blowers who would be in danger of losing their jobs, or in some countries their freedom or their lives, if the information was traced back to them. News of official abuses, human rights violations, war crimes or environmental dereliction are some of the areas where anonymous sourcing has broken open a story wide open -- think Watergate or Abu Ghraib. In cases such as these, with the approval of managers, the AP may grant anonymity to the whistle blower, in text withholding the name and in video and photos showing them from behind or in silhouette.

In addition, for anonymously sourced material, the AP routinely requires extra corroboration in the form of more than one independent source. And managers need to approve any use of anonymous material.

At the same time, there is a lesser variety of anonymity that has become all too common. Sometimes, paid spokespeople find it inconvenient to allow their names to be used even for official information. In some parts of the world, it is against rules or custom for spokespeople to be identified by name. Wherever possible, AP journalists are urged to push back against such lazy, casual requests for anonymity, pressing for permission to use the name or bypassing the information if necessary.

Journalists themselves can help to resist the contagion of anonymity by avoiding such tropes as citing unnamed “diplomats” or “analysts” for facts or views that are widely prevalent and could be obtained easily enough elsewhere. Another poor practice is quoting from social media posts in which the real identity of the poster is unknown. (Just say no, no matter how pithy or amusing the tweet.) Both these practices are banned under our standards.

The bar against anonymous comment is set high at AP. When the AP does agree to use anonymous material, reporters must have a good reason. We should provide as specific as possible a description of the source to establish his or her credibility (for example, “according to top White House aides” or “a senior official in the agency directly involved in the discussions”) and, when relevant, describe the source's motive for disclosing the information. If a story hinges on leaked documents, the reporter must describe how the documents were obtained, at least to the extent possible.

AP’s statement on news values and principles lays out the rules. Anonymous material may be used only if:


1. The material is information and not opinion or speculation, and is vital to the news report.
2. The information is not available except under the conditions of anonymity imposed by the source.
3. The source is reliable, and in a position to have accurate information.

On an average day, we have about a dozen uses of anonymity in the main text news report.

Many are garden variety uses, for example, “an official who insisted on anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the situation with reporters” or “a security official who said he could not be named due to regulations.”

Although some of this may be unavoidable, let’s work to bring it down, by pressing harder for named attribution, and by bypassing information that is not attributable by name and in the end is not important enough to risk the AP’s credibility.

Thanks for your attention to these issues.

Further guidance on this or other Standards questions, visit Standards.AP.Org or contact me directly at 

Best John

Stroud, Scott

From: Nessman, Ravi
Sent: Friday, December 02, 2016 12:55 PM
To: News - South News Editors Admin Correspondents
Subject: FW: Knocking Down Fake News

Please feel free to share this internally.

Ravi

All,

Oxford Dictionaries this month labeled “post-truth” the 2016 word of the year. You should see this for what it is: A threat to what we do. It is, in fact, a threat to Democracy itself, which relies on freedom of information and an objective, fact-based debate to reach consensus.

You may find that discouraging. It should also be clarifying. While people may be less inclined to be influenced by objective facts, it is our job – more than ever before – to guide people to legitimate news and help them sort out “fake news” from the real thing.

The AP has a critical role to play in fighting the scourge of fake news. We are not going to transform ourselves into the fake news police of the Internet, but we are going to be more aggressive about knocking down fraudulent stories when we can. As a first step in what we envision will be a multi-pronged strategy, we can start doing this right away. Here's how.

I'm asking each of you to alert your staff, and be on alert yourself, for stories that are trending on social media that simply aren't true, or are significantly untrue. When you see a story you believe to be false, and you're in a position to knock it down, this is a worthy use of your time and effort. If it's complicated or requires some special expertise, you may want to set it aside or refer to someone who is in a better position to handle it — Washington, Business News, etc.

These fake stories might involve an account of paid protesters being bused to anti-Trump demonstrations; or a story about an FBI agent in Clinton's email investigation being found dead in a murder-suicide. Both of those were actual articles seen by millions of Facebook users. Both were utterly false. These stories are NOT restricted to one political ideology, and they often transcend political news altogether. They not only misinform, but lead to a broader atmosphere where average readers may have trouble discerning fact from fiction. It's our job to help them.

These efforts for the moment will be straightforward. We will start by doing a simple text story that checks the facts – what is said, what is false, how we know it's false. Text slugs are BC-Fake news-xxx. Headlines should clearly delineate that we are knocking down a story: “Trending story on XXX is untrue.”

In cases where we strongly suspect something that is trending is fake but aren't able to verify that's the case immediately, a tweet on our private customer Twitter account and a wire advisory should be done.

The Trending Desk will be helping us on this, but I can't emphasize enough that this is everyone's responsibility. We care deeply about the truth and go to great lengths every day to ensure our stories are accurate. It's fundamental to journalism – in fact our democracy – that people have access to fact-based information. Let's all help make that easier for our audience.

Best,

Kathleen Carroll
Sally Buzbee
Brian Carovillano
Ian Phillips
Marjorie Miller
Sandy Macintyre
Denis Paquin

Stroud, Scott

From: Daniszewski, John
Sent: Tuesday, January 31, 2017 3:10 PM
To: News - All Editorial Staff
Cc: Easton, Lauren; Froke, Paula; Westfeldt, Amy; Drinkard, Jim; Carvin, Eric
Subject: From the Standards Editor -- Fact Check 101

Colleagues,

We have all heard the recent discussion about “fake news” and worries that the integrity of news is under attack in many places on the web and social media.

We also have learned, from our usage metrics and experience, that there’s a vast appetite out there for stories that hold politicians and public figures accountable for their words.

These factors are impelling the AP to strengthen and add a new dimension to our traditional fact-checking this year. Our goal is for the AP to be one of the major champions of accurate, fact-based information -- including pushing back against false reporting and fake news.

At the AP, we’ve always had the mission of “bringing truth to the world.” Fact-checking has been an important part of that, and one reason that we are among the trusted organizations partnering with Facebook to identify and debunk false information that’s gaining notice on that social platform, an effort showing positive effects already in its first month.

So it is a good time to review and define our general fact-checking policies and practices.

A RUNDOWN OF WHAT WE FACT-CHECK AND WHY:

There are two general categories ...

--We push back on political spin, exaggeration and falsehoods.

This is how the traditional AP Fact Check began, principally in Washington, looking at speeches by the president, political candidates and other politicians and officials. State and international bureaus have done fact checks too on speeches by other leaders, including at the United Nations.

--We debunk false reporting and the growing phenomenon of deliberately “fake news.”

We want to identify and debunk trending stories of all kinds, whether in text, photos or videos, that are fictional, contrived, twisted or otherwise patently false yet likely to be mistaken for truth by unwary news consumers. An example would be the widely circulated story last year that Pope Francis had endorsed Donald Trump’s candidacy for president. No such endorsement had occurred, yet many people believed it.

Note: The two genres of fact-check stories are distinguished by the editor’s notes that go with them:

-- The traditional fact checks carry this note in the Publishable Eds. Note field: EDITOR’S NOTE: A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

-- The “fake news” stories carry this note at the bottom of the story below a dash line: This story is part of an ongoing Associated Press effort to fact-check claims in suspected false news stories.

All of these are labeled as “BC-XX-XXXXX-Fact Check” in the slug and “AP FACT CHECK:” in headlines. Use an “#APFactCheck” hashtag on tweets and Facebook posts.

Here’s a Jan. 20 example:

BC-US--Trump-Inauguration-Fact Check

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's address echoed familiar, dubious themes

*By PAUL WISEMAN and CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
Associated Press*

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's inaugural address held familiar echoes of the campaign speeches that led to his presidential win: downbeat about the state of the nation, to the point of hyperbole. A look at some of his assertions:

TRUMP: "The jobs left, and the factories closed ... the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon."

THE FACTS: The American economy is a lot healthier than the wreck Trump describes. Jobs have increased for a record 75 straight months. The U.S. unemployment rate was 4.7 percent in December, close to a nine-year low and to what economists consider full employment.

From July through September, the economy expanded at a 3.5 percent annual pace — fastest in two years. The Federal Reserve is so confident in the resiliency of the economy that it raised interest rates last month for only the second time in a decade.

Still, Trump's talk of "rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation" rings true in communities that lost factories to low-wage competition from China and Mexico. And the jobless rate is low partly because so many Americans have stopped looking for work and are no longer counted as unemployed.

Wage growth has been sluggish since the Great Recession ended in mid-2009. But declining unemployment and steady job growth are starting to force businesses to offer higher pay to find and attract new workers.

And in 2015, the income for a typical household jumped 5.2 percent to an inflation-adjusted \$56,516, the largest annual growth in nearly five decades, according to the Census Bureau. Average hourly pay rose last year at the fastest pace in more than seven years.

SOME OTHER KEY RULES AND GUIDELINES

Be sure we are right. Never state in a fact check anything of which we're not certain.

Prioritize items with relevance and importance. We can't check every falsehood. Focus on things that matter.

Keep items short. The lead should present the assertion that's being checked, and quickly state what's wrong with it. Because it is words being examined, we need exact quotes. That should be followed by our presentation of the facts, backed by appropriate citations and attribution.

Stick to checking facts, rather than opinion. A person's personal tastes and preferences might lie outside the mainstream, but as opinions they are not a topic for a fact check.

Our ruling doesn't have to be black and white. Statements can fall along a wide range of accuracy, and we don't use a rigid rating scale to make our judgments. A statement can be false, exaggerated, a stretch, a selective use of

data, partly or mostly true. We use the most apt description that's supported by what we know.

Make use of the AP's in-house expertise. Fact checks are reported stories. AP's own beat reporters, from politics and government to science, sports and medicine, are among our best resources to make sure our fact checks are solid.

Remember, let's all be bullish about examining political statements, debunking untruths and running down false reporting. And when in doubt, consult a senior manager or the Nerve Center about whether a proposed story rises to the level of an AP Fact Check.

Thank you,
John

John Daniszewski

Vice President for Standards

Editor-at-Large

The Associated Press

T: +1 212.621.1615

E: jdanziszewski@ap.org

POSTED IN **ANNOUNCEMENTS** ([HTTPS://BLOG.AP.ORG/ANNOUNCEMENTS](https://blog.ap.org/announcements))

AP Fight against fake news



Lauren Easton (<https://blog.ap.org/contributor/lauren-easton>)

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Lauren Easton

(<https://blog.ap.org/contributor/lauren-easton>)

Director of Media Relations

@LaurenEastonAP (<https://twitter.com/LaurenEastonAP>)

As part of its broader fact-checking efforts, The Associated Press announced Thursday that it will work with Facebook (<http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/12/news-feed-fyi-addressing-hoaxes-and-fake-news/>) to help identify and debunk trending “news” stories being shared online that are false.

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AP's top editor: Media must call out facts (<https://blog.ap.org/industry-insights/aps-top-editor-media-must-call-out-facts>)

Sept. 15, 2017

AP stories dispelling patently false trending news articles already appear on the AP wire, on APNews.com (<https://apnews.com/>) and on the AP News app (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ap-news/id364677107?mt=8>). These stories, which will now say “AP Fact Check” in the headline, include details on AP’s efforts to verify the facts in fake news stories.

Now, when AP or another participating fact-check organization flags a piece of content as fake, Facebook users will see that it has been disputed and there will be a link to the corresponding article explaining why. That flag will follow the content if a Facebook user chooses to share it.

“AP has long done some of the most thorough fact-checking in the news business,” said Sally Buzbee, AP’s incoming executive editor. “This initiative is a natural extension of that tradition, and of the AP’s long-standing role setting the standards for accuracy and

ethics in journalism.”

AP has consistently provided nonpartisan fact checks to its member news organizations and customers, which objectively examine the claims of politicians and government and other officials.

In recent weeks, AP has been identifying fake news stories, such as a false report that President-elect Donald Trump had allowed a homeless woman to live in Trump Tower. It also debunked a trending story that claimed Hillary Clinton won only 57 counties in the U.S. presidential election.

AP has long set the industry standard for accuracy and ethics in journalism, through its rigorous code of News Values and Principles and through The Associated Press Stylebook, which is used by news organizations around the world.

In an earlier memo to staff signed by AP news leaders, Vice President for U.S. News Brian Carovillano explained:

It is our job – more than ever before – to guide people to legitimate news and help them sort out “fake news” from the real thing.

The AP has a critical role to play in fighting the scourge of fake news. We are not going to transform ourselves into the fake news police of the internet, but we are going to be more aggressive about knocking down fraudulent stories when we can.



Flowers and notes left by well-wishers are displayed outside Comet Ping Pong in Washington, Dec. 9, 2016. A fake news story prompted a man to fire a rifle inside the popular pizza place as he attempted to "self-investigate" a conspiracy theory that Hillary Clinton was running a child sex ring from there, police said. (AP Photo/Jessica Gresko)

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What to know about 'Not Real News'

Published: 8/18/2017 Last Updated: 8/21/2017

As part of our ongoing efforts to fact-check claims in suspected false news stories, AP has been publishing weekly roundups of some of the most popular untrue headlines of the week, debunking them and making clear the facts.



NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week


By The Associated Press
Aug. 11, 2017

<https://apn>

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A roundup of some of the most popular, but completely untrue, headlines of the week. None of these stories are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked these out; here are the real facts:

NOT REAL: John McCain Says He 'Accidentally' Voted No On Healthcare Repeal

THE FACTS: The Republican senator from Arizona has expressed no regrets over his dramatic vote last month that sank a GOP effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act, despite this story shared by americannews88.com. The 80-year-old McCain returned to Washington to weigh in on the effort after being diagnosed with a brain tumor. McCain explained shortly after the vote that he opposed the GOP bill because it didn't offer meaningful reform.

5

The weekly fixture, "Not Real News: A look at what didn't happen this week," launched in May.



Nerve Center manager

Amy E Westfeldt, who oversees the effort, explained its origins and how the roundup fits into AP's greater fact-checking mission.

Why did AP start the Not Real News roundup? What has the response been so far?

We first began publishing AP Fact Checks of suspected false stories in December, when we began an initiative with Facebook to debunk widely shared stories that were not true. Not Real News is an outgrowth of that. We thought a tight 5-things list would be accessible and shareable for our customers and the public, and draw good attention to our core mission of fact-based journalism.

We also found that some of the "fake news" fact checks sometimes did not require as much nuance and explanation as our regular AP Fact Checks. Not Real News provides us a vehicle to dispense quickly with false stories that are trafficking widely, and gives us a different way to brand these types of fact checks.

We've received very positive feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, customers and the public since this launched on a weekly basis in May. Responses on the AP's social platforms have been positive, where people saw it as a guide for what not to pay attention to in all the feeds coming at them. Newspapers have said they use it in their print editions regularly. Larger digital customers (Yahoo) have praised it and used it to draw in users on social media.

Each installment includes a variety of false stories. How does AP decide which ones to include?

We have several ways to track popular but false stories — in-house metrics tools we use, like NewsWhip, among them. We look at the stories Facebook users are flagging or sharing widely. Sometimes a bureau will point out an item that bubbled up on a reporter's beat and we'll find them that way.

Trending news reporter

Patrick Mairs of both the East Desk and the one-man Trending Desk is my key partner in identifying and debunking these stories. We will often trade suggestions for what might work, and what we are in a position to debunk — we get help from our experts around the globe. Moscow's correspondents reached out to the Kremlin last week so we could address false comments attributed to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the pope. Our Supreme Court correspondent has been able to debunk opinions attributed to justices because he's read them and interviewed the justices.

When we select which stories to include, we are looking for pieces that are "off the news" — we frequently find false stories that are riffing off the top story of the day. A Charlottesville item is in today's fixture. We are looking at pieces that might be easily misconstrued, or easily believed or questioned, so we can provide the service of debunking them.

And the stories have to meet all AP standards for fact-checking. We don't fact-check opinion. Hyperpartisan sites, particularly since the presidential election, produce many stories that are challenged on social media, but often produce opinionated versions of the day's headlines. We also stay away from items that don't work on a poor-taste level, pieces that wouldn't meet our standards for publication if they were true.



How does Not Real News fit into AP's greater fact-checking efforts?

This is another innovation to address the evolving platforms and methods customers and the public are consuming fact checks and news overall. We are always going to be in the business of fact checks. We are simply looking for new opportunities and delivery methods to reach our diverse customer base. Not Real News specifically addresses the false stories that purport to be news. And as a part of our work with Facebook, it is a key way we hopefully deter the proliferation of these stories on social networks like Facebook.

Read today's installment of Not Real News.

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AP NEWS TOP NEWS SPECIAL COVERAGE ARCHIVE ESPAÑOL VIDEO RADIO

Sep 15, 1:21 PM EDT

NOT REAL NEWS: A LOOK AT WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN THIS WEEK

A roundup of some of the most popular, but completely untrue, headlines of the week. None of these stories are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked these out; here are the real facts:



AP Photo/Alan Diaz

NOT REAL: Florida Governor Rick Scott Now Listed As 'Critical' After Bizarre Hurricane Cleanup Accident

THE FACTS: The Last Line of Defense, a well-known producer of hoax stories, has claimed in a series of articles that Scott was severely hurt when a ceramic roof tile hit him in the head Monday during the cleanup following Hurricane Irma. Scott has been crisscrossing Florida surveying damage and checking in on relief

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efforts in the days since the storm hit and was not injured.

NOT REAL: Georgia Mosque KEEPS Hurricane Harvey donations, will send to Syrian refugees instead

THE FACTS: This viral hoax story from Daily Notify says the Ramazala Mosque in Peachton, Georgia, is diverting relief money for Harvey victims to refugees from Syria. Neither the mosque nor the town exists. In addition, the photo included in the story also appears on the site of a Canadian relief organization providing aid to Myanmar.

NOT REAL: Vladimir Putin donates \$5 million dollars to Houston Hurricane Harvey victims

THE FACTS: While many well-known figures opened their wallets to make sizable contributions to relief efforts in Texas, the Russian president wasn't one of them. A site make up to look like a news outlet claims Putin also called on "other individuals, organizations and also countries" to follow his lead in donating money. Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov tells the AP he's not aware of the leader making any such donation.

NOT REAL: Tony Romo OUT 4-6 Weeks After Suffering Sore Throat In Broadcasting Debut

THE FACTS: The former Cowboys quarterback is scheduled to be in the CBS broadcast booth Sunday in New Orleans when the New England Patriots take on the Saints. A prank story from Daily Snark claimed Romo would be replaced by a young broadcaster named Pak Brescott. The site appears to be ribbing Romo, who lost his job to rookie Dak Prescott last year after getting injured in the preseason.

NOT REAL: World's most popular candy to be removed from shelves by October 2017!

THE FACTS: Fans of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups shouldn't be concerned about the sweet and salty snack disappearing just before Halloween despite a story from

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