The Process of Establishing Integrity: Quick Checklist
Susan Maret, Ph.D.
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Information integrity, integrity of information - The state that exists when information is unchanged from its source and has not been accidentally or intentionally modified, altered, or destroyed. Veracity, veracity of information - In ethics, truthfulness or honesty in communication.

The Checklist

Authority
• An editor or editorial board listed?
• Any ads? Or are ads disguised?
• Any code of ethics present for the organization or group?
• Any conflict of interest stated?
• Any disclosure statements available?
• Biographical information present? Any credentials, expertise, and/or affiliations listed?
• Branding or a logo present on the site and/or source?
• If a Web site or blog, what is the domain name (e.g., .gov, .org, .info, .com, country, .tv)?
• If a Web site, blog, or other source (e.g., YouTube), is there an “About Us” section?
• Who created or authored the material?

Copyright
• Copyright restrictions or Creative Commons license stated on the site?

Design and Usability
• If a blog or Web site, is there clear architecture, navigability, and design?
• Is the date of the material listed? Is the content current or legacy?

1 This checklist grew out of a course I teach, INFO 281 Integrity of Information, iSchool, San Jose State; Also adapted and expanded from Stony Brook's Center for New Literacy Project, http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org and Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).
Fact-checking

• If the information, including photos and memes, is posted, shared, or retweeted, is there an attempt by the sender to fact-check, track down source(s), and validate claims?
• Is an explanation of fact-checking methods and/or trust indicators provided by the fact-checker?
• Who are the individuals and organizations behind fact-checking? Their affiliations, funding, politics, and reputation?

The Message

• Any specialized, technical language used? Doublespeak? Use of metaphors?
• Can you determine perspective (e.g. I know, I believe, first person, opinion)?
• Does the language appeal to the mind or emotions? Does the headline of the article or post support the main point(s) in the text?
• If the appeal is to emotions, are “loaded” words or terms used? That is, language that may trigger an emotional response?
• Is there conflation or any (logical) fallacies that can be identified within the piece?
• Who and what isn’t included in the material? In other words, what is missing?
• What conclusions, claims, assumptions, and alternative explanations are made in the piece?
• What evidence is given to support main points?
• Who is quoted? Spokespeople within organizations or industry? “Government officials”? Anonymous sources?
• Finally, are Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How addressed in the post and/or article?

Citing, Grammar, & Style

• Any peer-reviewed sources cited in-text and/or in a ref/bib section?
• Any references linked in-text and in a distinct ref/bib section?
• Correct grammar and spelling?
• Sources cited correctly using a manual of style (e.g., APA, Chicago)?

Methods

• Any guidelines available that outline research practices used?
• Any statistics or graphics (e.g., charts) used? Where are they derived? How are they interpreted?
• What methods, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed are utilized?
• Reliance on anonymous sources?

7 Metaphors have the power “to define reality” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 157). See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, 156-159).
8 From Information is Beautiful, http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/rhetorical-fallacies/

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