

NiemanLab

Facebook, Twitter, and 30 other orgs join First Draft's partner network to help stop the spread of fake news

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Thanks to social media, it's never been easier to get people to read and spread fake news. Readers love to share surprising, shocking or worldview-affirming stories, and publishers, eager for more traffic and ad revenue, love to write them — often without confirming first-hand whether those stories are true. Just look at the news today, rewritten and unconfirmed by many major news sites, that a Chinese zoo named a newborn gorilla “Harambe McHarambeface.”



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how can we slag off FB for fake news when this is the state of the industry tbh pic.twitter.com/bfsial2HKy

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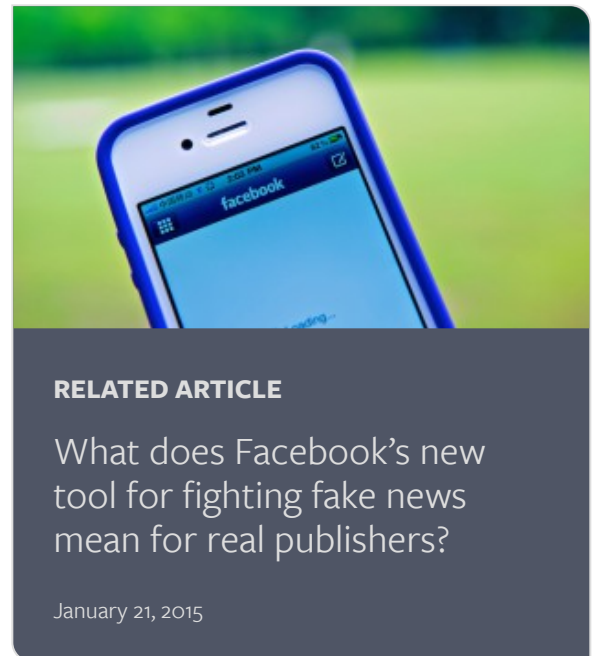
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The **fake news problem** is at the heart of the latest effort from **First Draft, the Google-backed organization** created to help newsrooms and other groups improve how they handle the sourcing and verification of stories

from social media. The new **First Draft Partner Network**, which it announced today, will bring together over 30 news organizations (including **The New York Times**, **The Washington Post**, and **BuzzFeed**) and tech companies such as **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **YouTube** to share best practices on how to verify true news stories and stop the spread of fake ones. The group's upcoming efforts will include training programs, the creation of a non-binding set of best practices, and the development of "collaborative verification platform."

The standout organization here, of course, is Facebook, which has had an outsized role in spreading fake news, thanks largely to its scale and the nature of its algorithm. Facebook has developed a handful of efforts to curb the spread of fake news on its platform, including tweaks to its algorithm and a feature released last January that let users flag posts as "a false news story."



Of course, Facebook has also had a hand in spreading fake news firsthand. Just last week, Facebook featured in its trending section a story that claimed that bombs, not planes, were responsible for collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11. That story came just a few days after Facebook's trending section featured a fake story about Fox News firing anchor Megyn Kelly. Both those stories came soon after Facebook's decision to fire the human editors that ran the trending section, which came under fire after a May Gizmodo story reported claims that the section was biased against conservative news sites.

The First Draft Partner Network comes at a key time for publishers, which are sourcing an increased share of their stories from social networks. The

problem: People don't trust them when they do. A new study in the journal *Journalism Studies* found that people see stories sourced from Twitter and Facebook nowhere near as credible as those sourced from interviews and press conferences. Changing that dynamic isn't likely to be easy.

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