

Verifying Information

Rodrigo Zamith

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Verification refers to the act of establishing or testing the truth or correctness of a fact, theory, statement, etc., by means of special investigation or comparison of data

Value of Verification

- Verification is necessary to ensure that journalists get what happened down correctly
 - Accuracy is not truth, but truth requires accuracy
- Skepticism lies at the heart of U.S. journalistic culture
 - News sources often have a motivation (or agenda) for speaking with journalists
- Journalists trade on their social currency, which in turn is shaped by how credible they are perceived to be
 - More credible journalists will have their work taken more seriously

Interrogate Your 'Facts'

- Interrogate all of your 'facts' as you would a suspect
 - How do we know this? Why is it 'true'? What assumptions underlie this? **Why should someone believe this?**
- Goal of the interrogation: **triangulation**
 - Finding multiple sources that say or show the same thing
 - Triangulation should help increase confidence in the accuracy and truth of something
- Always strive to get as close to the primary (original) source of the information

Useful Websites and Tools

- The most useful general tool: a search engine
- Verifying identifies: [AnyWho](#) and [Spokeo](#)
- Verifying pictures: [TinEye](#), [Google Image Search](#), [FotoForensics](#)
- Verifying locations: [Google Maps](#)
- Checking for misinformation or disinformation: [Snopes](#)

Bookmark Reliable Information Sources

- Major producers of factual information:
 - Local, state, and federal governments
 - Academic institutions and research groups
 - Non-profit interest groups
 - Supranational governmental bodies
- Bookmark reliable sources and organize them so that you can quickly locate them by topic/theme
 - Useful services and tools: [Raindrop](#), [Memex](#)

Keep an Accuracy Checklist

- After you have written your story, double-check:
 - Spelling of names, companies, titles, and place names
 - The statistics featured in the story
 - References to time, distances, and dates
 - Quotations
 - Basis for arguments or narratives
- Can be helpful to print a copy of the story, circle every ‘fact’ and make sure they’re correct **and correctly attributed**

Key Takeaways

- Verification refers to the act of establishing or testing the truth or correctness of a fact, theory, statement, etc., by means of special investigation or comparison of data
- Verification helps protect a journalist's credibility, which is a key form of social currency for journalists.
- There is no single way to engage in verification but there are a number of resources that can help you verify information quickly