

Why do we fall for misinformation?

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CENTER FOR AN INFORMED PUBLIC

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON



The Viral 'Study' About Runners Spreading Coronavirus Is Not Actually a Study. *Vice News*



The machine runs amok

Twisted facts, fake news and social media spoofs can turn society upside down. One UW team is working to help us through the infodemic.

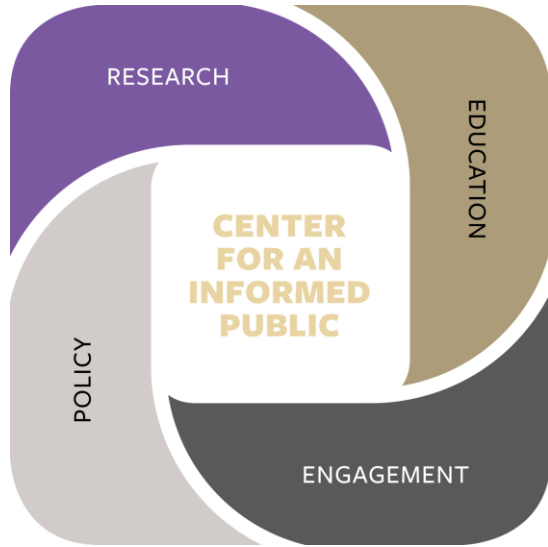
BY MALAVIKA JAGANNATHAN | ILLUSTRATION
BY STACY NGUYEN | DECEMBER 2021





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Mission: resist strategic misinformation, promote an informed society, and strengthen democratic discourse.



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ENGAGING PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The CIP serves as an educational resource for public libraries and regularly collaborates with librarians and library staff:

Research and co-design

- Library programs and services
- Professional development
- Conferences
- Community Fellows



INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES



Photo by Loren Javier / Flickr via CC BY-ND 2.0 DEED



Photo courtesy of Center for Informed Public

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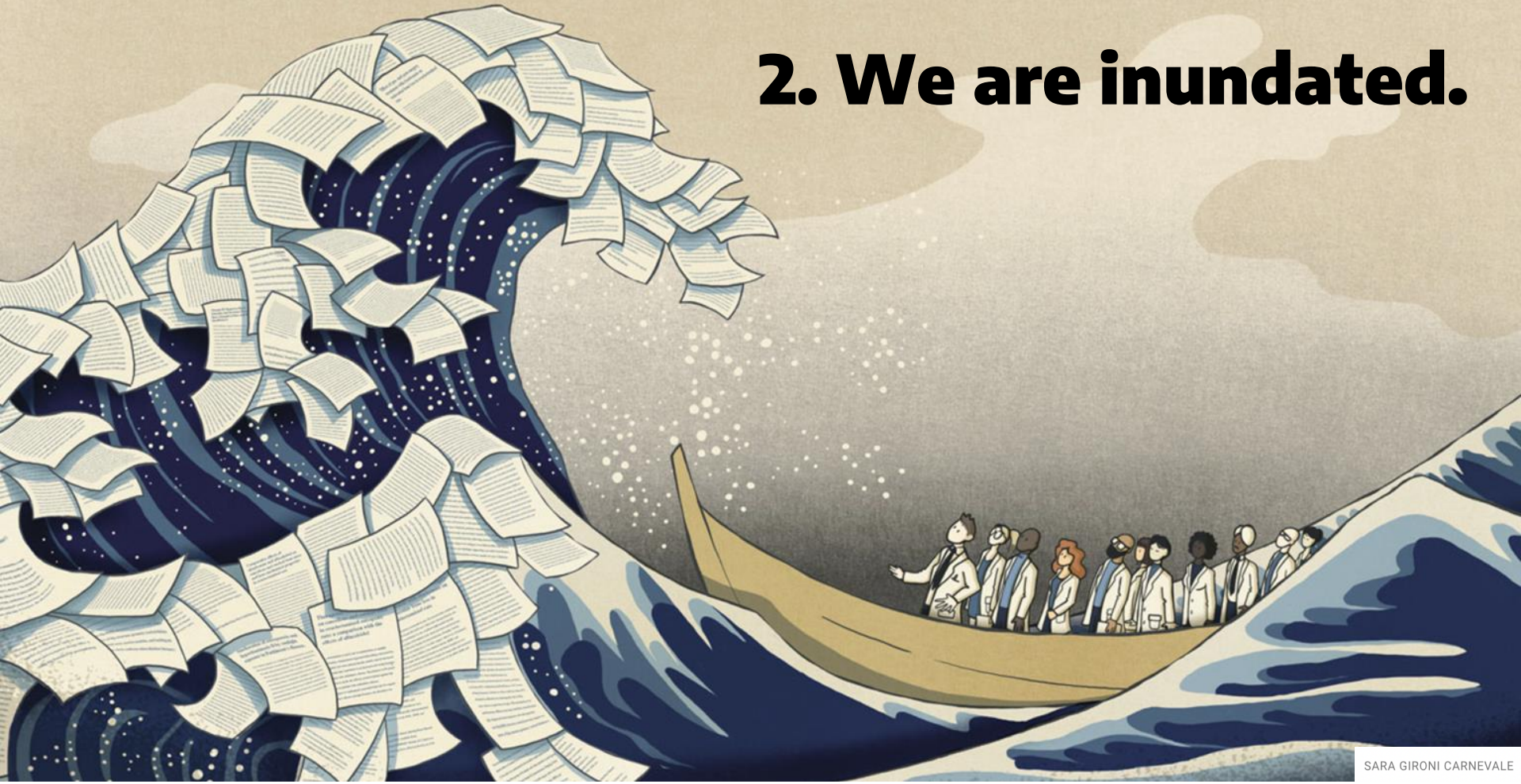
1. We are human



Neil Thompson
Artist



2. We are inundated.





US surgeon general Vivek Murthy: 'Loneliness is like hunger, a signal we're lacking something for survival'

As the 19th and 21st surgeon general, Dr Vivek Murthy has described loneliness as an epidemic on par with tobacco use - the antidote, he says, is human connection

by [Katherine Rowland](#)

World view



By Aleksandra
Cichocka

To counter conspiracy theories, boost well-being

It is better to stop misinformation taking root than to try to weed it out.

Conspiracy theories can undermine political participation, discourage environmental protection and incite violence. Involvement in online conspiracy-theory communities, such as QAnon, can contribute to violent extremism, according to an analysis this year (A. Amarasingam and M.-A. Argentino *CTC Sentinel* 13(7), 37–44; 2020). And those who believe conspiracy theories are less likely than those who don't to comply with public-health measures. The World Health Organization has called on countries to manage the spread of false information.

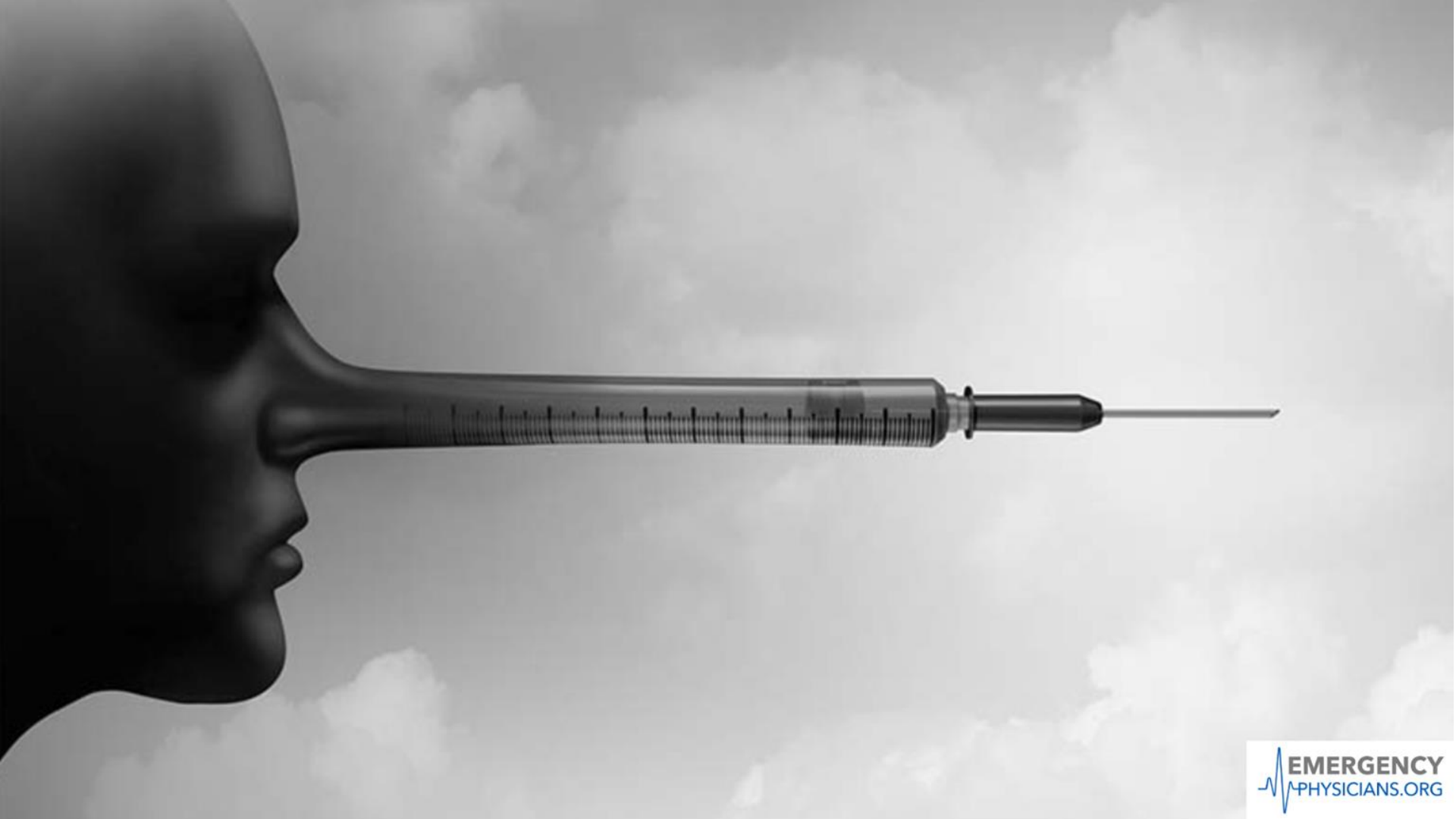
“**Neglecting the mental-health crisis risks perpetuating an information one.**”

time might reach for extraordinary explanations.

Will recovering from the pandemic, then, mean recovering from the ‘infodemic’? I fear not.

First, being able to mix more freely might ease some social needs – but feelings of grief, uncertainty, powerlessness and marginalization will continue for those who have lost health, loved ones, jobs, education and so on. Recovery plans should look beyond economic upturns and physical health. Neglecting the mental-health crisis risks perpetuating an information one.

Second, we know too little about how individuals’ vulnerability to conspiracy theories changes over time. Even daily psychological fluctuations might have a role: people are more likely to entertain conspiracy theories in anxiety-inducing moments. And understanding the long-




3. Data voids are an inevitability.



From 'evidence' to rules for argument..

From 'evidence' to rules for argument..

Digital Civics: How do we know what we know (**epistemology**)?

the facebook files 

Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show

Its own in-depth research shows a significant teen mental-health issue that Facebook plays down in public



4. Social media is designed to be addictive.

the facebook files

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World / Asia

Finance worker pays out \$25 million after video call with deepfake 'chief financial officer'



By Heather Chen and Kathleen Magramo, CNN

🕒 2 minute read · Published 2:31 AM EST, Sun February 4, 2024

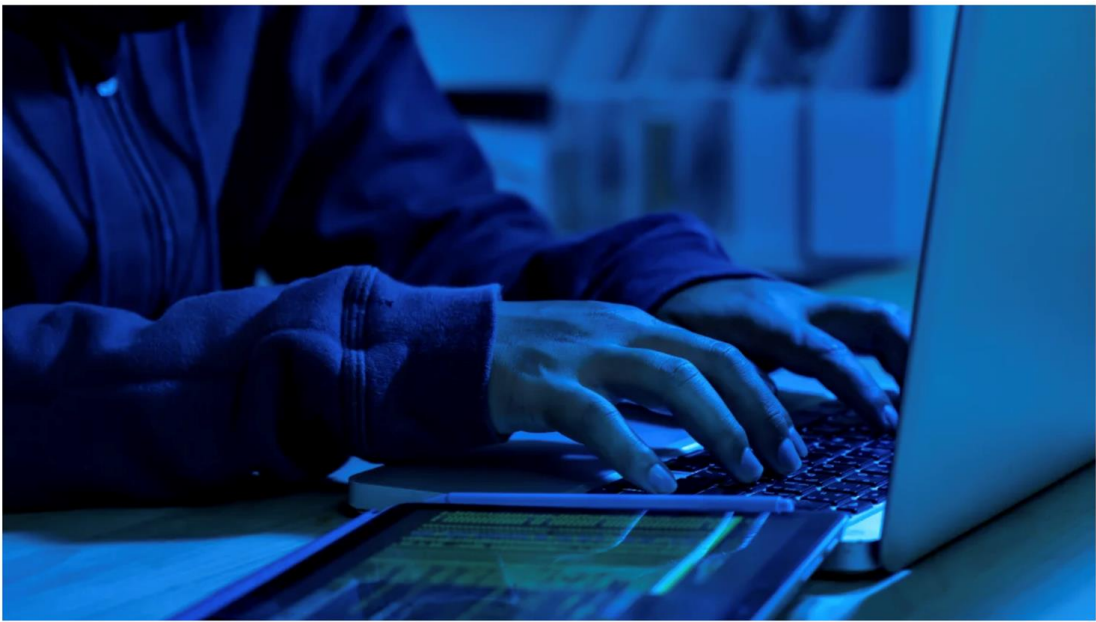


Authorities are increasingly concerned at the damaging potential posed by artificial intelligence technology. boonchai wedmakawand/Moment RF/Getty Images

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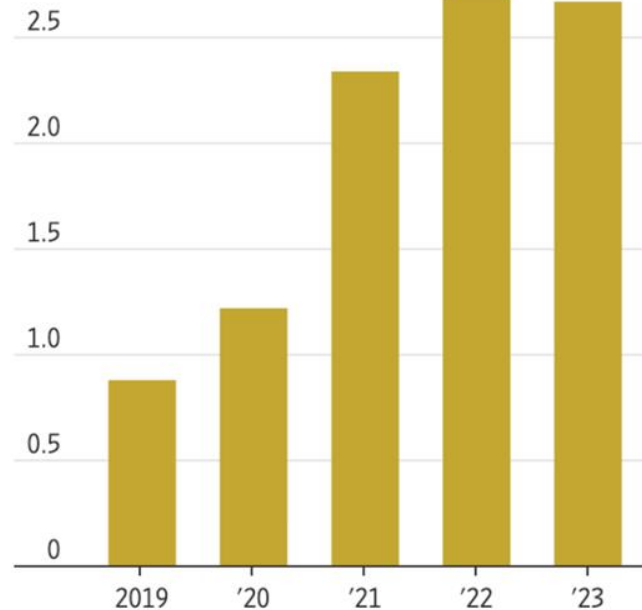
Authorities are increasingly concerned at the damaging potential posed by artificial intelligence technology. boonchai wedmakawand/Moment RF/Getty Images

5. Synthetic media is harder to detect.



Reported losses from imposter scams

\$3.0 billion



Source: Federal Trade Commission

Phony Billionaires on Facebook Are Scamming Americans Out of Their Life Savings

A fake Bill Ackman, a bogus Cathie Wood and a false Steve Cohen are among the impersonators luring victims

Generative AI



Images: DALL-E



Why do we fall for misinformation?

- 1: We are human
- 2: We are inundated.
- 3: Data voids are an inevitability.
- 4: Social media is designed to be addictive.
- 5: Synthetic media is harder to detect.

Why do we fall for misinformation?

1: We are human

2: We are inundated.

3: Data voids are an inevitability.

4: Social media is designed to be addictive.

5: Synthetic media is harder to detect.

Photo: Carl Bergstrom



What can we do about it?

POLL: Why do we believe/read/share certain information?

[See poll in Slido at right and check all that apply]

- The information has been verified
- Information feels true
- Information fits a worldview
- Information provokes an emotional reaction
- Algorithms amplify selective content
- Manipulated information is harder to discern
- Other
- All of the above



**Ok, so how
do we
address
this?**



Image: Pixabay

What librarians told us

- **New approaches**
- Complements to skills
- Psychological dimensions
- Respectful of different beliefs
- Address misinformation indirectly
- Conversation and peer learning



Image: IFLA

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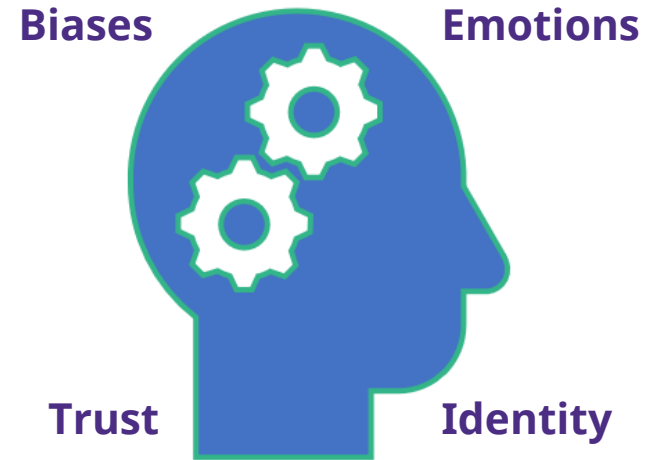


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Image: elinery2005

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“You have to hide the vegetables”

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Design challenge

Experiential

- Experience what it's like to be fooled and make mistakes

Psychology of misinformation

- Confirmation bias, third-person effect
- Emotional triggers

Social

- Peer learning
- Foster discussion
- Appeal across the ideological spectrum

Leverage public libraries

- Information professionals
- Trusted institutions

Misinformation Escape Room



Images courtesy of Center for an Informed Public



Librarian facilitating conversation

Librarian: *Okay, when you learned that the video was a deepfake that you guys have been "tricked". How'd you feel?*

Speaker 2: *I was shocked.*

Speaker 3: *Honestly yeah, I wasn't expecting that. So I was just like, Oh, dang.*

Speaker 4: *Yeah.*

Speaker 2: *We had just spent time looking at bots and stuff like that. So it's like, how did I not notice? Maybe it was just a really good deepfake... I don't know, I wasn't looking that close.*

Speaker 3: *I don't think I was paying attention... [overlapping conversation].*



Meeting people where they are

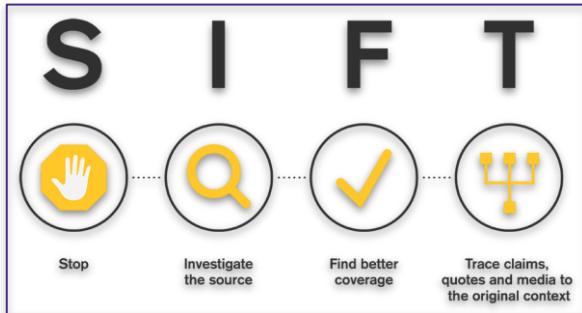
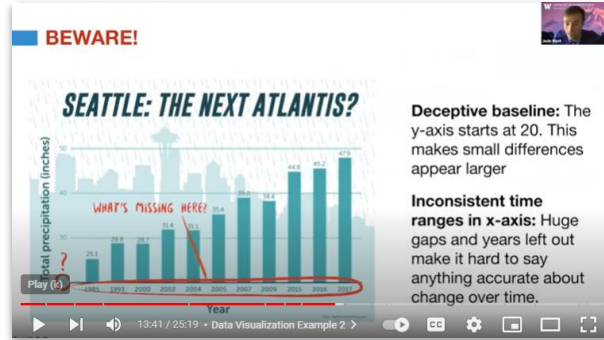
- > We are all vulnerable
- > People believe things for different reasons
- > Need approaches for:
 - Different populations
 - Different vulnerabilities
 - Different motivations
 - Different contexts



Image: Shutterstock

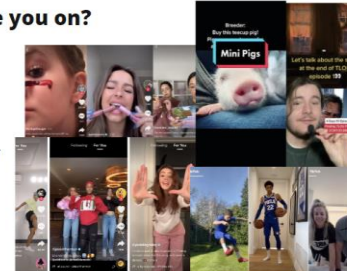
Empowering Informed Communities

Images courtesy of Center for an Informed Public



What side of TikTok are you on?

What kind of content do you see on your "side"?



Do you know of any other "sides" of TikTok that aren't on your FYP but may be on others?

Kate Lapinski Intro

- Director of Adult Services
 - Civic, Cultural & Literary Engagement and Adult Learning & Economic Advancement
- Goal of my CIP Fellowship: To begin a sustained misinformation effort
- Chicago Public Library 81 locations and 1200+ staff
- ASID is All-Staff Institute Day

CIP Resources @ All-Staff Institute Day

- Escape Room –
The Euphorigen Investigation
 - Games and info
at lokisloop.org
- Extremely popular: slots filled
before any other session – we had
to add more!
- In schedule listing said nothing
about misinformation

- MisinfoDay: *An annual media literacy educational event bringing together high school students, teachers and librarians to learn how to navigate complex information environments and make informed decisions about what to believe online*
- **Resources, tools, activities available online so MisinfoDay can take place all over – MisinfoDay Resource Library**
- 5 tables had to work for participants of all different levels
- Goal was to provide different engagement types

The Euphorigen Investigation

- Staff from all different departments
- Very high energy & fun
- Provided a lot of hints... maybe even some answers!



Photos by CPL staff

MisinfoDay

- Started with "Why We Fall for Misinformation" keynote everyone watched together
- 5 Activity Tables:
 - Game, Article discussion, Fact-checking, Types of misinfo presentation, Deepfake quiz



Photos by CPL staff



What We Heard

Escape Room Debrief Conversations

- SO fun! Really wanted to win so believing and sharing the video were ok
- Found it very difficult – faces, videos, etc. Personally don't share anything on social media
- See patrons having issues with misinfo "all the time." Librarian personally acts as an expert in what is true and what is not.

MisinfoDay

- Was "really challenging but in a good way"
- "Wished the session was more applicable to programming and/or librarianship"
- Observed – people taking a lot of notes, really watching and engaging with the material.

What We Think & Next Steps

- Euphorigen Escape Room:
 - My staff said that people were way more into it than they thought!
 - It was difficult for a lot of the groups.
- Misinfo Day:
 - Should have been done in Adult Services Meeting
- Generally – have to find a way into the subject that is **not academic** and is **not defeatist**.

- Next Steps for Us:
 - Embracing that both units (Civic and Learning) have a hand in this effort
 - On agenda in Adult Services Cluster Meeting
 - Growth for Misinformation/Disinformation Interest Group
 - Patron Programming

EMPOWERING INFORMED COMMUNITIES

an information literacy resource hub for public libraries

- > Adapting and updating CIP resources for public libraries
- > Three additional webinars (Oct '24 - Apr '25)
- > A series of Communities of Practice /CoPs (to begin ~Apr '25)

THANK YOU

Jevin West, Associate Professor

Chris Coward, Senior Principal Research Scientist

University of Washington Information School

Co-founders, Center for an Informed Public

Kate Lapinski, Director of Adult Services

Chicago Public Library



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