

Poynter.

B.S. Detection for Digital Content

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Dan Wootton

Exclusive: [@PiersMorgan](#) suspended from his CNN show while investigations continue following new revelations on alleged phone hacking claims

36 minutes ago via web



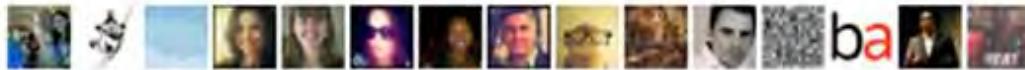
@AntDeRosa

Anthony De Rosa

Piers Morgan suspended by CNN

28 Jul via [TweetDeck](#) ☆ [Favorite](#) ↻ [Retweet](#) ↶ [Reply](#)

Retweeted by [trixiebelle121](#) and 26 others





@danwooden

Dan Wootton

Exclusive: Jennifer Lopez is divorcing Mark Antony and returning to her former love, Julius Ceasar

16 Jul via web [Favorite](#) [Retweet](#) [Reply](#)

Retweeted by [bradford_jones](#) and 8 others



I'm the fake showbiz editor of the paper formerly known as the News of the World and the poor man's Perez Hilton. Follow me for best unsubstantiated gossip.

Verifying Social Media Info

With thanks to Mandy Jenkins (@mjenkins, ZombieJournalism.com)

Old School Never Gets Old

- Develop human sources.
- Contact people, talk to them.
- Be skeptical. Too good to be true?
- Consult credible sources.
- Familiarize yourself with search and research methods.
- Communicate and work together.

Evaluate the Account & Person

- On Twitter, [check when account was created](#). Be suspicious of brand new accounts.
- Analyze the network: friends, followers, conversations, retweets.
- What do they usually tweet/post about? Where do they say they are? How does it compare?
- Evaluate tweets before and after.
- Check their Klout score

Check Outside Social Media

- Google the handle/name with “spam, scam, spammer” etc. to see if others have complained.
- See if you can find other accounts online with the info you have. Search the username, or use [Identify](#) in Firefox, [HoverMe](#) in Chrome.



Contact/Crowdsource

- DM them, get one the phone, Skype. Get details and additional corroboration from people, images etc.
- Are others reporting this?
- Bring in the crowd by asking for help, additional info. Be clear about what you *don't* know.

Anyone else reporting this yet? RT @andinieffendi: White House confirms Pres Obama has received a message from Colonel Gaddafi - Sky News

less than a minute ago via TweetDeck ☆ Favorite ☰ Retweet ↻ Reply



Andy Carvinacarvin

Hearing reports that Abdul Majeed al-Zindani hurt or killed in car accident. Politician, head of Yemen Muslim B'hood. *Not* confirmed.

less than a minute ago via TweetDeck ☆ Favorite ☰ Retweet ↻ Reply



Andy Carvinacarvin

Source? RT @mohdashoor: Bahrain regime demolishes "Shahrakkan Maternity Hospital" after it accepted injuries from previous clashes.

less than a minute ago via Twitter for iPhone ☆ Favorite ☰ Retweet ↻ Reply



Andy Carvinacarvin

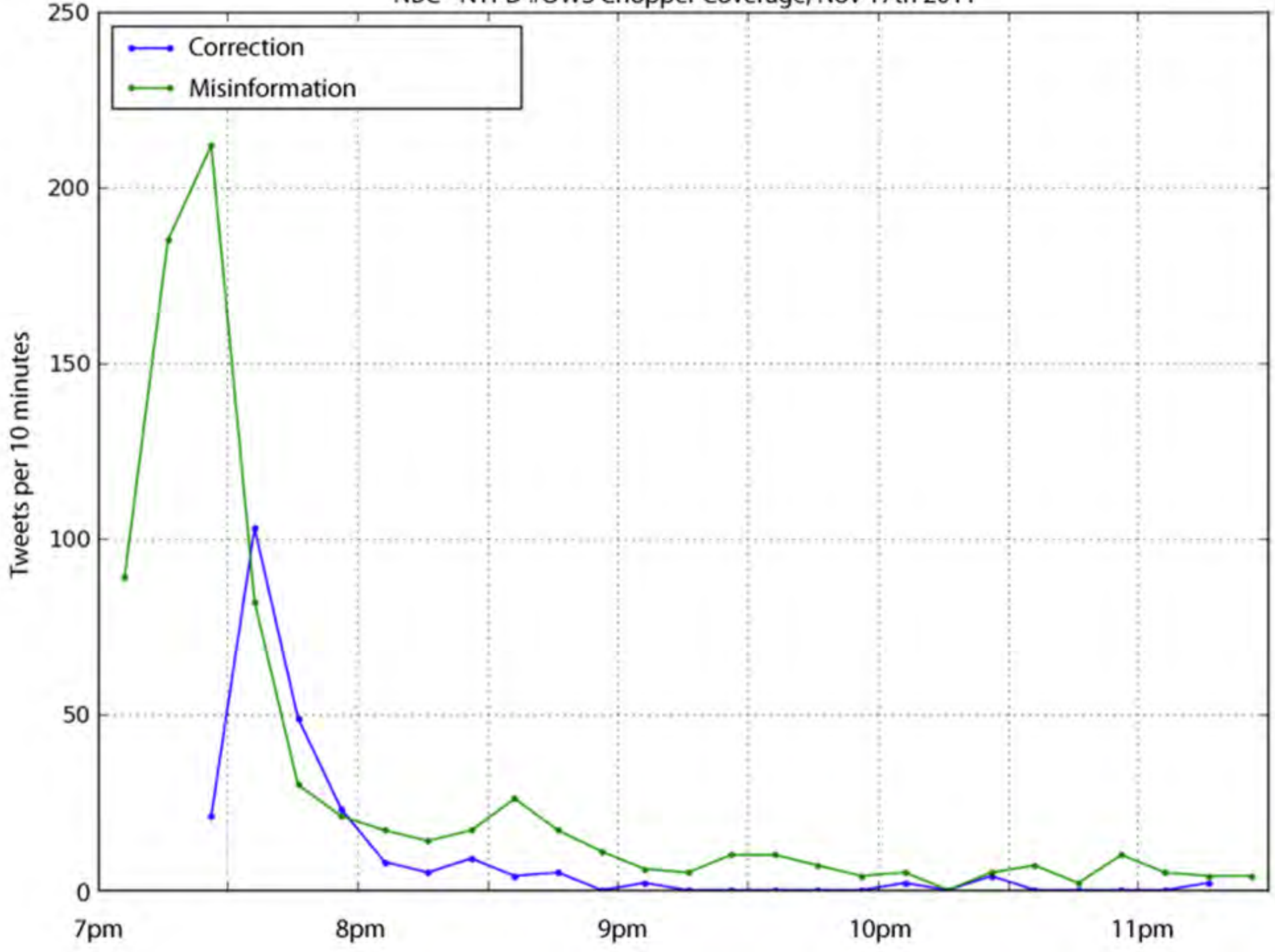
Lessons

- Andy is not just about SM. Lots of old school work comes first.
- What you don't know is just as, or more, important as what you do.
- Hedging often gets stripped, so work to confirm before you tweet
- Questions encourage interaction, convey uncertainty.
- He RTs and adds context and info.
- He develops sources.
- He is present.

Law of Incorrect Tweets

The initial, mistaken information will be retweeted more than any subsequent correction

NBC - NYPD #OWS Chopper Coverage, Nov 17th 2011





@salma_khan

Salma Khan

"A shark swimming in the street in Puerto Rico after **#HurricaneIrene** hit."

pic.twitter.com/J7yDR4f



powered by Photobucket

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25 Aug via web [Favorite](#) [Retweet](#) [Reply](#) [Storify this](#)

Retweeted by [MartijnKrook](#) and 100+ others





© Thomas P. Peschak

Verifying Images

- Check exif info: regex.info/exif.cgi
- Check for edits to photos: errorlevelanalysis.com/
- Check history of photo: TinEye
- Reference locations against maps and existing images from the area.
- Check clothes/buildings/language/license plates/vehicles etc. Do they support the image?
- Examine weather reports, shadows to confirm conditions shown fit date and time.

what was the weather in halifax nova scotia on August 23, 2011

Examples Random

Input interpretation:

weather **Halifax, Canada**
 Tuesday, August 23, 2011

Recorded weather for Halifax, Canada:

Show metric More

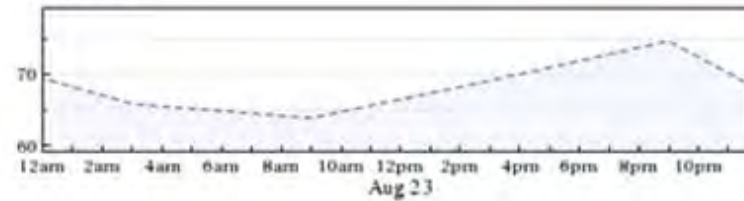
time range	day of Tuesday, August 23, 2011
temperature	(64 to 75) °F (average: 68 °F)
relative humidity	(33 to 57)% (average: 47%)
wind speed	(5 to 15) mph (average: 10 mph)

Units +

Weather history:

Day Show metric Less

Temperature:



low: 64 °F
Tue, Aug 23, 9:00am

average: 68 °F

high: 75 °F
Tue, Aug 23, 9:00pm

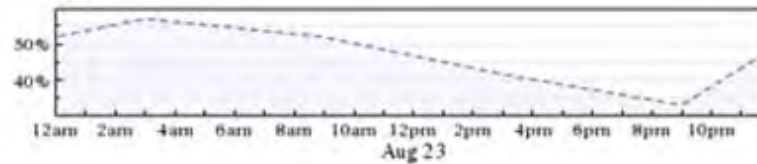
Precipitation rate:

(none)

Daily precipitation:

(none)

Humidity:



low: 33%
Tue, Aug 23, 9:00pm

average: 48%

high: 57%
Tue, Aug 23, 3:00am

Verifying Images

- Review the uploader's history/location to see if he/she has shared credible content in the past or may be scraping from others.
- Are there images before and after you can compare to?
- Get them on the phone/Skype to talk about the image.
- Beware of the amazing shot in a breaking news situation.

WEB DEVELOPERS

Are Internet Explorer users dumb?

July 29, 2011 | By Doug Gross, CNN

[Share](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#)[Recommend](#)17,597 people recommend this.
Be the first of your friends.

Are users of other Web browsers smarter than the people who use Microsoft's Internet Explorer?

A new survey doesn't quite say so. But it sure as heck suggests it.

The survey by AptiQuant, a Vancouver-based Web consulting company, gave more than 100,000 participants an IQ test, while monitoring which browser they used to take the test.

The result? Internet Explorer users scored lower than average, while Chrome, Firefox and Safari users were slightly above average.

And users of the more obscure Camino and Opera browsers, as well as those using Explorer with Chrome Frame (a plug-in designed to let users view emerging HTML5 content), had what AptiQuant called "exceptionally higher" IQ levels.



Verifying Web Info

- [Whois lookup](#) on the domain.
- Check Internet archive and overall history of the site/organization/person.
- Check site's [PageRank](#).
- Is clear and credible ownership/credit information offered? Footer information point to a real ownership entity?
- Does site/page have life? (Comments, likes, tweets, recent content, links in & out...)

Verifying Web Info

- Do blog and news searches to see if it/people/company has been talked about/covered already. Find the original source.
- Are people bookmarking it on Diigo or Delicious?
- Use the phone, send some emails *before* you publish anything.
- Check names. Do they have a personal history? Drawn from history or literature?
- Do the numbers add up?

Debunking B.S.

“It would seem that expecting people to be convinced by the facts flies in the face of, you know, the facts.”

Two Researchers

1. Brendan Nyhan, Dartmouth
College/Columbia Journalism Review
2. Jason Reifler, Georgia State University

One Paper

[Misinformation and Fact-checking: Research Findings from Social Science](#)

Four Concepts

1. Selective Disclosure

“People seek out information that is consistent with their pre-existing views and avoid information that contradicts their prior beliefs ...”

Four Concepts

1. Selective Disclosure

2. The Backfire Effect

“When your deepest convictions are challenged by contradictory evidence, your beliefs get stronger.” (David McRaney)

Four Concepts

1. Selective Disclosure
2. The Backfire Effect
3. Motivated reasoning

We are highly biased about topics we care a great deal about. Causes rationalizing rather than reasoning. Selecting experts. Choosing science.

Four Concepts

1. Selective Disclosure
2. The Backfire Effect
3. Motivated reasoning
4. Illusion of Truth

Familiar claims start to seem true over time.
Beware of repetition.

Understand

1. Facts alone are not enough
2. Our brains resist correction
3. Repetition is effective, regardless of the information.
4. The purveyors of misinformation are organized, motivated and very experienced at pushing lies.
5. Beware of the “rumor bomb”
6. Journalists are surprisingly bad at correcting misinformation.

Tips

- Don't hesitate.
- Be positive: "Barack Obama is a Christian."
- Avoid condemnation: don't personalize, or partisanize.
- Find experts who have credibility and no baggage. (And who adhere to #3.)
- Appeal to their views/values.
- Tell a story, show a picture.
- Once debunked, don't look back.

Additional Reading

- [Best practices for social media verification](#)
- [Accuracy and accountability checklist for social media](#)
- [The journalist's guide to gutless online verification](#)
- [The human algorithm](#)
- [BBC processes for verifying social media content](#)
- [Meet Andy Carvin, verification machine](#)
- [The challenge of verifying crowdsourced information](#)
- [Resources to help journalists with accuracy and verification](#)
- [How to: verify content from social media](#)
- [Misinformation and Fact-checking: Research Findings from Social Science](#)