Mountain or Molehill? Developing Online Tutorials on Web Source Evaluation

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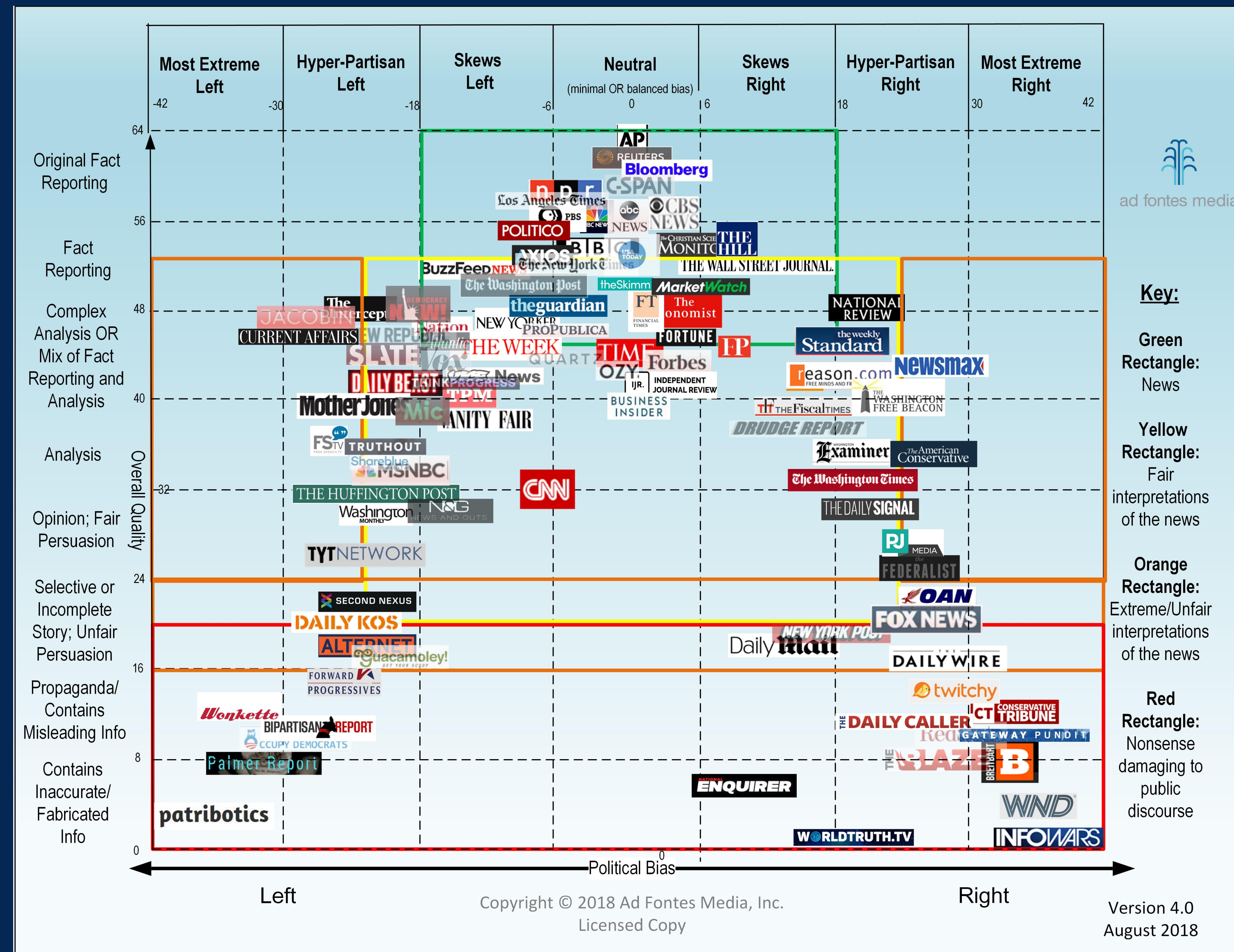**Auburn University Libraries**

INTRODUCTION

As part of our online instructional content in Canvas, we partnered with Auburn Online to create a tutorial on web source evaluation. As we began writing the script, we realized this was a much larger and more nuanced topic which required two tutorials: one on general web source evaluation, and one on news source evaluation specifically. We had multiple reasons for separating the two:

- Length of the tutorial
- Specific and evolving criteria for news sources
- Usefulness for instructors
- Findability

PHILOSOPHY

Students interact with web sources every day, but they may not have had a reason to think critically about them. We wanted to create tutorials that treated students like the mature information consumers that they are, while drawing back the curtain on the nuances that go into web sources. This includes publication ethos, external influences on web sources, and what instructors mean when they ask for "credible" sources.

ACTIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Card Sort
- Mini Quizzes
- "Your Turn" Forms
- Videos

VIEW THE TUTORIALS

lib.auburn.edu/tutorials

WEB SOURCE EVALUATION

1. Types of Web Sources

   News, Magazine, Org., Blog, Social Media

2. Evaluation Criteria

   Source requirements

   Credibility

   Publishing information

   Author experience

   Original vs Reproduced News

   References/Sources

3. Domain Names

   Breaking the myth of .org and .gov

4. Finding Web Sources

NEWS SOURCE EVALUATION

1. Types of News Articles

   Editorial, Feature, Review, Sponsored Content, Clickbait

2. Media Bias

   Pattern of Stories, Tone, Range

3. Ads

   Audience, Affiliation, Product/Services, Ad Placement, Quality

4. Fake News

   Propaganda, Disinformation, Conspiracy, Clickbait, Satire, Bias Challenging

MEDIA BIAS CHART

Developed by Vanessa Otero and Ad Fontes media, analysts use a rubric to rate articles from media outlets, then rank the outlets based on partisan affiliation, factual reporting, and interpretation of news events. See more at their website, adfontesmedia.com

FUTURE EXPANSION

- Lateral Reading
- Filter Bubbles
- Examining Authority as an Elitist Construct
- Breaking Down Credibility
- Media Manipulation of Trust
- Media Bias ≠ "Bad" Source
- Combating Misinformation

CONCLUSION

Source evaluation will always be a challenge in library instruction but breaking down this large-scale topic can be one strategy. Web source evaluation is ever-evolving and changing but focusing on the most foundational elements is key in teaching first-year students.

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