

ALA American Library Association

**LEARNING  
AND  
PROTOTYPING  
REPORT**

**DECEMBER 2018**

**(media  
literacy)**  
@ YOUR LIBRARY

A project of the American Library Association

# About Media Literacy at Your Library .....

*Media Literacy at Your Library* was a project of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University (CNL), supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Democracy Fund, and the Rita Allen Foundation as part of the **Knight Prototype Fund**.

Through this project, ALA sought to address a critical need in the field for adult media literacy education, with a focus on news literacy. The goal of the prototype project was to develop media literacy training and complementary resources designed to prepare public library professionals to educate their adult patrons to be informed media consumers.

Following a one-day training led by CNL, teams from five public libraries took on the challenges of creating innovative media literacy programs serving their distinct communities. With the goal of making the CNL news literacy curriculum more broadly accessible to the library field, the teams also offered feedback on a series of online trainings based on the in-person training they attended. These five library teams guided and informed ALA and CNL’s understanding and development of prototype resources over the course of the project.



# The Libraries .....

In August 2017, ALA launched a competitive application process for public libraries to be part of the *Media Literacy at Your Library* prototype project. Upon closing the application period, proposals were peer-reviewed by volunteers from the library field. The result was a national cohort of five public libraries serving communities with diverse issues, demographics, and geographic locations.

The libraries included Estes Valley Library, Estes Park, Colo.; Auburn (Maine) Public Library; Skokie (Ill.) Public Library; Huntsville–Madison County (Ala.) Public Library; and San Diego (Calif.) Public Library.

Each of the selected libraries had teams consisting of three people, including at least one library director or manager. The additional two team members for each library included staff members specializing in adult services, community engagement, and/or technology education. Auburn Public Library’s team included the executive editor of their local newspaper, *The Lewiston Sun Journal*.



## The Curriculum .....

In October 2017, the library teams traveled to Chicago to participate in a one-day in-person media literacy workshop. The training featured CNL’s news literacy curriculum and was facilitated by Michael Spikes, director of the [News Literacy Digital Resource Center at Stony Brook University](#). The Digital Resource Center shares the wisdom and materials of the news literacy teaching community, providing free resources for teachers of all grade levels to find archived materials, teacher-training courses, and course-development tools.

The in-person training utilized a modified version of the news literacy curriculum designed by Stony Brook University to teach participants how to help their adult patrons be savvy news consumers. The training focused on developing critical thinking skills in order to judge the reliability and credibility of information adults encounter through print, television, and the internet. Focus areas included educating librarians on what news literacy is; how to identify trustworthy information; how to identify fair vs. biased information; and how to apply news literacy concepts in real life.

Based on feedback from the in-person training, ALA and CNL developed a series of three online learning sessions to deliver the essentials of the in-person training, for eventual use by the wider library field. Feedback on format and delivery was collected from the libraries over the course of a five-month period.

**ABOVE**  
**Michael Spikes**  
facilitating the  
October 2017  
workshop for the  
*Media Literacy at*  
*Your Library* cohort.

## Library Programs .....

Between November 2017 and March 2018, the five cohort libraries were asked to create and implement at least three public programs in their communities utilizing the CNL curriculum. The five libraries surpassed that minimum programming requirement, offering 28 total programs and reaching approximately 900 adult patrons. Below are examples of the programming they produced.

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### AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY

**LOCATION:** Auburn, Maine

**REGION:** East Coast

**COMMUNITY TYPE:** Suburb/Rural

**POPULATION:** 23,055



**Auburn Public Library** brought a unique perspective to their programming by making the executive editor of *The Lewiston Sun Journal* a member of their project team. By doing so, the team was able to include professionals' viewpoints in their exploration of media literacy topics.

Auburn Public Library's programming utilized academic lectures and films focused on the news-making process to spur conversations with adult patrons. The library hosted three screening and discussion programs featuring the classic films *Page One*, *Network*, and *All the President's Men*.

*Page One*, a documentary following the daily tasks of three writers at the *New York Times*, sparked a conversation about how the internet has shaped modern news and made it difficult to maintain traditional journalism. *Network*, a satire about a news anchorman who announces on air that he plans to kill himself on live TV, started a discussion on how news can be sensationalized and built on false premises. *All the President's Men*, a political thriller about the Watergate scandal, invited a conversation on how news is collected and the ramifications of the work of investigative reporters like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

The library also hosted a discussion about where community members get their news, which sources they trust, and how they decide what is true or false, and shared tips and best practices for smart news consumption.

Due to the success of Auburn Public Library's programming, one of their team members will be teaching a six-week course on the rise of fake news for older adults at the Lewiston/Auburn College.



## ESTES VALLEY LIBRARY

**LOCATION:** Estes Park, Colo.

**REGION:** Rocky Mountains

**COMMUNITY TYPE:** Rural

**POPULATION:** 5,858



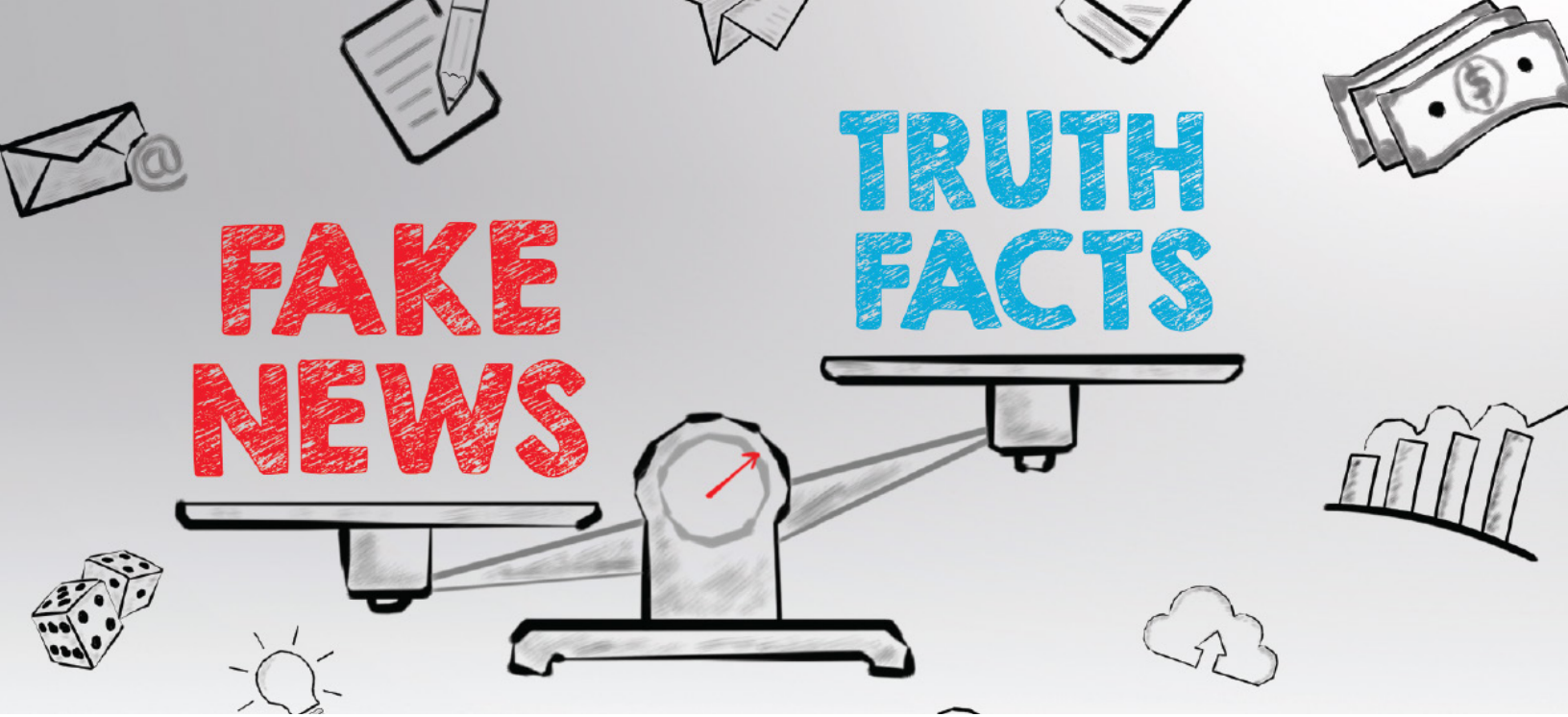
In their rural town of Estes Park, [Estes Valley Library](#) saw a large response to their *Media Literacy at Your Library* programming. Their first program, Fake News 101: To Believe or Not to Believe, was so popular that the event was relocated to the Estes Park Town Hall to accommodate its 104 attendees. The program featured Dr. Elizabeth Skewes, Journalism department chair at the University of Colorado Boulder and former campaign reporter, who led the community in a conversation on the news and history of news hoaxes. (See [Resources](#) for a link to an article about this program.)

Additional programs included Fake News Online: To Share or Not to Share and Insights from the Experts: A Panel Discussion on the Media. For Fake News Online, patrons brought their computers or mobile devices to the library for a hand-on demonstration of why it's more difficult than ever to discriminate between news, opinion, entertainment, and advertising. Insights from the Experts featured a panel of local and regional experts who discussed challenges in delivering accurate information to large numbers of people and how the traditional challenges are complicated by the expansion of news outlets and social media.

Estes Valley Library also utilized the CNL curriculum to train their entire staff on media literacy, ensuring that they all had the proper knowledge and tools to conduct news reference interviews.

ABOVE

[Packed Estes Park Town Hall at Estes Valley Library's Fake News 101: To Believe or Not to Believe program.](#)



## HUNTSVILLE-MADISON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

**LOCATION:** Huntsville, Ala.

**REGION:** South

**COMMUNITY TYPE:** City/Suburb

**POPULATION:** 180,105

Huntsville, Alabama, is home to Cummings Research Park, the second largest research park in the United States and a large employer of STEM professionals in the area. Serving such a tech-focused community, the Huntsville–Madison County Public Library felt it was imperative to better foster their adult patrons’ media literacy skills. To help facilitate this, the library created “[Media Literacy in a Fake News World](#),” a libguide that compiles resources that promote news accuracy and consumer awareness of accurate and false news.

Corresponding with the libguide, the library developed Credible or Clickbait, a recurring hands-on workshop that helps users determine what is real news and what is fake on social media and other sites.

Additional Huntsville–Madison County Public Library programs included How the Media Combats Fake News, a panel of journalists discussing the media’s role in combating inaccurate information, and Citizen Journalism and Fake News, a lecture led by the project team discussing the impact of the news, both real and fake, in our media and how we can responsibly consume and share information.

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Graphic used by Huntsville-Madison County Public Library inviting patrons to a series of events discussing investigative journalism and fake news.

## SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

**LOCATION:** Skokie, Ill.

**REGION:** Midwest

**COMMUNITY TYPE:** Suburb

**POPULATION:** 64,784



**Skokie (Ill.) Public Library** sought to give their patrons a sense of control in a chaotic media climate by encouraging them to be active news consumers and contributors. As part of their *Media Literacy at Your Library* events, Skokie Public Library expanded upon their existing CivicLab—a pop-up library program that offers information, activities, and discussion on issues facing their community—with a News Discussion Group. The goal of the group was to give patrons a space to come together and collectively analyze and discuss the viral news items they come across on social media. Following these discussion programs, the library provided resources to the participants about news databases and tools from the Chicago workshop. (See [Resources](#) for a link to an article about Skokie Public Library’s Civic Lab series.)

In addition to their Civic Labs, Skokie Public Library also hosted a series of workshops led by local experts that sought to provide adults with resources to remain informed and in control without getting exhausted. One of the workshops, *Get a Grip: How Do You Get the News?*, was led by the nonprofit civic journalism lab City Bureau. This workshop gave participants an inside look at how newsroom decisions are made and how audiences can influence coverage in their communities, disrupt the news systems, and give power back to the people.

Other workshops equipped patrons with tools to not only read the news but write it. *What Makes it News?* taught participants news values before leading them through a news-writing activity using what they learned, and *How Do You Check Facts?* invited journalists to share fact-checking techniques with the public. The purpose of these workshops was to challenge participants to think about how and why they consume the news and ways it can best serve them.



ABOVE  
**Bettina Chang**  
of City Bureau  
presents on civic  
journalism at the  
Skokie Public Library.



## SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

**LOCATION:** San Diego, Calif.

**REGION:** West Coast

**COMMUNITY TYPE:** City

**POPULATION:** 1.307 million



As the largest library system in the cohort, [San Diego \(Calif.\) Public Library](#) piloted their programming at three branches: the Central Library, the Scripps Branch Library, and the La Jolla Branch Library. San Diego's programming sought to demystify the news process for their patrons and address systemic biases and flaws of American mainstream media that contributes to misinformation and distrust.

Two San Diego Public Library programs focused on questions of representation in the news and challenges for underrepresented groups working in the media. The library partnered with the Association of Black Journalists, the Asian American Journalists Association, San Diego State University (SDSU) School of Journalism, and SDSU's Women's Studies department to host a series of panels focusing on women and minorities in the media. These panels addressed such questions as stereotypes, difficulties influencing the news, and access and obstacles for women and minorities working in the media.

To demystify the news process, San Diego also hosted a Citizen Journalism workshop that taught participants about the news process and how they can play an active role in analyzing and reporting the news.

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[Women in the Media panelists speak to the audience at San Diego Public Library's La Jolla branch.](#)



## Findings .....

Through the *Media Literacy at Your Library* prototype project, ALA worked with an interdisciplinary social science think tank to do limited evaluation and analysis of project data collected through surveys, weekly journaling, and final reports from the participating libraries. Through analysis of project data collected through surveys, weekly journaling and final reports from the participating libraries, the following notable findings emerged.

**News consumers think they are better at media literacy than they actually are.** There is a gap between patrons’ *confidence* in their media literacy skills and their *actual* media literacy skills—resulting in some people “opting-out” from programming or training that they may deem unnecessary. Future media literacy initiatives should work to address this discrepancy.

**The CNL curriculum was effective in training library workers in media literacy skills, both in person and online.** Following the in-person training with CNL, cohort members felt more confident providing media literacy programming and resources for their communities; in fact, the cohort repurposed some of the resources and activities from the CNL curriculum for use in library programs with the public. Cohort members expressed interest in two types of virtual training: an online course that instructs library workers on media literacy skills so they may effectively lead outreach efforts in their communities, and a public-facing online course or suite of resources for use by library patrons.

**To avoid the perception of bias, balance is critical—within reason.** Library news literacy programs featuring speakers with one viewpoint or from only one media outlet may be perceived as biased. In communities with multiple media outlets, the perception of bias can be avoided by including a wide spectrum of perspectives. In communities with fewer or single media outlets, balance can be more challenging.

**Young and marginalized audiences are the most difficult to reach.** As with other library programs, *Media Literacy at Your Library* cohort sites had the most difficulty reaching younger and disenfranchised adult audiences with their media literacy programming. Future efforts may consider branching media literacy programming and services into community spaces that are more accessible to better reach these audiences.

**Working with a team is invaluable.** While the CNL curriculum was effective, *Media Literacy at Your Library* cohort members widely noted that peer learning and networking was vital to supporting community media literacy goals. Library workers who wish to lead media literacy programming in their communities are encouraged to create peer working groups of library staff and partner organizations.

ALA Public Programs Office research and evaluation partner  
**New Knowledge Organization Ltd.** assisted with these findings.

## What's Next? .....

*Media Literacy at Your Library* demonstrated an ongoing demand for adult media literacy programming and a need for professional development resources to support the role of library workers as adult media literacy educators. The project also enabled ALA to closely examine CNL's curriculum and receive library worker feedback on its effectiveness for the public library context.

The work of the *Media Literacy at Your Library* prototype project provided invaluable insights and a path for development of additional resources. In response to demand in the library field for additional media literacy training and resources for library workers and their communities, ALA's plans include:

- **A one-day media literacy workshop** for library professionals to be offered at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.. "Media Literacy at Your Library Training" will be held on Friday, June 21, 2019.
- **Convening a cross-sector dialogue** on media literacy for adult audiences.
- **Developing and distributing** a suite of media literacy professional development tools for use in libraries, including an online training series, responsive to prototype feedback, and a practitioner's guide.\*

\* Pursuant to additional grant funding

## Stay Involved .....

- **Share your media literacy programs with your peers** on ALA's Programming Librarian website. Visit [ProgrammingLibrarian.org](http://ProgrammingLibrarian.org) to **submit information** about a successful media literacy program held at your library.
- **Explore the media literacy resources available** through the Center for News Literacy's Digital Resource Center. The **news literacy teaching resources** are all free and easy to use.
- **Connect with the Programming Librarian Interest Group** on Facebook. The Programming Librarian Interest Group (PLIG) is an ALA Member Initiative Group that enables library workers to network and share ideas about library programming. **Join the group on Facebook**; ALA membership is not required.

- **Sign up for the Programming Librarian e-newsletter.** The twice-monthly e-newsletter, sent from ALA’s Public Programs Office, includes grant opportunities, resources, and professional development opportunities. [Sign up online.](#)
- **Contact us.** If you have questions or comments about this work, please email ALA’s Public Programs Office at [publicprograms@ala.org](mailto:publicprograms@ala.org).

## Resources .....

### WEBINARS

- “[Post-Truth: Fake News and a New Era of Information Literacy](#),” Programming Librarian, Feb. 22, 2017
- “[Don’t Get Faked Out by the News](#),” American Association of School Librarians, Feb. 23, 2017
- “[Fake News Workshop](#),” University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of information Sciences, Feb. 1, 2017

### LIBGUIDES AND RESOURCES

- “[Evaluating Information](#),” ALA LibGuide
- “[Is It True? Try These Fact-Checking Websites and Resources](#),” Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library
- “[What is ‘Fake News’?](#),” Cleveland Library, Colby-Sawyer College
- “[Fake News: How to Spot It](#),” Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Md.
- “[Media Literacy in a Fake News World](#),” Huntsville–Madison County Public Library
- “[Fake News](#),” Indiana University East Campus Library
- “[Understanding & Identifying Fake News: What, Why and How](#),” Miami Dade College, Hialeah, Fla.
- “[Fake News \(And How to Fight It\)](#),” Miami Dade College Kendall Campus, Miami, Fla.
- “[Truth, Lies and Quibblers: Media Literacy for a New Era](#),” Oakland (Calif.) Public Library
- “[Fake’ News](#),” Penn State University Libraries
- “[Help with the Headlines](#),” Skokie (Ill.) Public Library
- [Center for News Literacy](#), Stony Brook University School of Journalism
- “[Real News/Fake News: About Fake News](#),” University of California Berkeley Library

[“How Do We Become Better Citizens of Information?”](#) (video), University of Minnesota Libraries

[“Evaluating Information: Fake News,”](#) University of Washington Libraries

## NEWS

[“Don’t Get Faked by the News \(Blog\)”](#) by Lesley S.J. Farmer, American Association for School Librarians, Feb. 23, 2017

[“Evaluating Sources in a ‘Post-Truth’ World: Ideas for Teaching and Learning about Fake News”](#) by Katherine Schulten and Amanda Christy Brown, The New York Times, Jan. 19, 2017

[“To Test Your Fake News Judgment, Play This Game”](#) by Tennessee Watson, NPR, July 3, 2017

[“5 Ways Teachers Are Fighting Fake News”](#) by Sophia Alvarez Boyd, NPR, Feb. 16, 2017

[“Fake News: A Library Resource Round-Up”](#) by ALA Public Programs Office, Programming Librarian, Feb. 23, 2017

[“Fake News 101”](#) by Diana Laughlin, Programming Librarian, April 16, 2017

[“Civic Lab”](#) by Mimosha Shah, Programming Librarian, April 30, 2018

[“Librarians Take up Arms against Fake News”](#) by Jerry Large, Seattle Times, Feb. 6, 2017

[“U-M Library Battles Fake News with New Class”](#) by Sydney Hawkins, University of Michigan News, Feb. 16, 2017

## FURTHER READING

*Web Literacy for Student Fact Checkers* by Mike Caulfield

*Fake News and Alternative Facts: Information Literacy in a Post-Truth Era* by Nicole A. Cooke

*Unspun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation* by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Brooks Jackson

*Blur: How to Know What’s True in the Age of Information Overload* by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel

*A Field Guide to Lies: Critical Thinking in the Information Age* by Daniel J. Levitin

# PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS .....

## **AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

The American Library Association (ALA) is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, the ALA has been the trusted voice for academic, public, school, government and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all. For more information, visit [ala.org](http://ala.org).

## **CENTER FOR NEWS LITERACY**

Housed within the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University, the Center for News Literacy is the only university-level Center in the United States researching and creating the curriculum and concepts for teaching students how to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports, whether they come via print, television, radio, the internet, or social media. Over 15,000 students have benefited from the Center's work nationally and abroad. The Center's animating principle is that the ability of a nation's citizens to judge the reliability and credibility of information will be a leading indicator of the public health of civil societies.

## **DEMOCRACY FUND**

The Democracy Fund is a bipartisan foundation established by eBay founder and philanthropist Pierre Omidyar to help ensure that our political system can withstand new challenges and deliver on its promise to the American people. Since 2011, Democracy Fund has invested more than \$60 million in support of effective governance, modern elections, and a vibrant public square.

## **JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION**

Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy.

## **RITA ALLEN FOUNDATION**

The Rita Allen Foundation invests in transformative ideas in their earliest stages to leverage their growth and promote breakthrough solutions to significant problems. It enables early-career biomedical scholars to do pioneering research, seeds innovative approaches to fostering informed civic engagement, and develops knowledge and networks to build the effectiveness of the philanthropic sector. Throughout its work, the Foundation embraces collaboration, creativity, learning and leadership. For more information, visit [ritaallen.org](http://ritaallen.org).