EVALUATING SOURCES (FOCUS ON WEB/NEWS SOURCES)

If you are teaching students about evaluating sources and would like to focus on web/news sources, refer to:

- Choosing the Best Web Source
- How to Identify and Debunk Fake News
- Objectivity in Reporting

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Objectivity in Reporting
Objective vs. persuasive journalism: Opinion and persuasive examples include accounts, columns, commentary, op-eds, and reviews. Look at word choices, tone, and design.

Website Evaluation
Discuss the differences among .edu, .com, .gov, .org, etc. Many students take these URL designations for granted and don’t understand the importance or usefulness of them.

ACTIVITIES

Describing a Source
Either provide a health article citing a study(ies) from a popular news site, such as the BBC or The New York Times, or ask students to find one. Direct students to locate the original source of any statistics and identify:

- Who created this information (study authors)
- Where the study originally was published
- The purpose of the study
- The source of the data
- A description of the population
- A description of the sample
- A short definition of the problem
- A short definition of the variables for the statistic reported in the newspaper
- Benchmark variables
- Questions about how the data may be flawed

If time allows, ask the students to find benchmark variables and write an evaluation of the statistic.
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Evaluating News Sources
Have your students examine the infographic on the next page and discuss what they see. Discussion questions might include: What do you notice about the funding sources for the new organization described in this infographic? How might revenue sources influence the content of a particular news organization? What, if anything, do you think news organizations can do to minimize bias or influence from funding sources?

Another activity to accompany the infographic would involve asking your students to locate 2 to 3 news reports from the different news organizations on the same topic and compare them, taking into account what they have learned about their funding. Ask them: What, if any, alignment does the angle of the news piece have with a particular point of view? Is the perspective what you expected, given the funding sources? Do you think this source succeeds in being objective? Why or why not?
To work in partnership with Member Stations to create a more informed public — one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas and cultures. To accomplish our mission, we produce, acquire, and distribute programming that meets the highest standards of public service in journalism and cultural expression; we represent our members in matters of their mutual interest; and we provide satellite interconnection for the entire public radio system.

**ANNUAL SOURCES OF REVENUE**

- **39%** MEMBERSHIP
  - Dues and fees paid by member stations
  - Underwriting announcements made on air about a business—paid by corporate sponsors
- **24%** CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP
  - Financial support from Member Stations and organizations
  - NPR journalists don’t select corporate sponsors and are held to NPR’s ethical standards.
  - “NPR makes decisions about national corporate sponsors based on principles established by NPR’s Board of Directors”
- **15%** OTHER SOURCES
  - Distribution division that collects revenue from stations and producers that use its platform for broadcast distribution
  - Income from facility rentals, “NPR-branded consumer products (such as those sold at the NPR Shop), and license fees”
- **14%** GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS
  - From institutions and nonprofits
  - Funds can support member stations
- **8%** NPR FOUNDATION
  - “Enhances current and long-term financial support for NPR”
  - Managed by GO Board of Trustees members
  - Donor Privacy Statement assures NPR “generally refrains from disclosing information about its donors” though it will disclose “names of its donors above a certain level”

**REFERENCES**


**FOLLOWING THE $$$ TRAIL: NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, INC.**

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**12 member station managers elected by fellow member stations**

**17 FOREIGN BUREAUS**

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