

ARTICLES

Fact check

Still not core journalism curriculum

Abstract: Fact-checking has become a global industry, with more than 417 fact-checking outlets in 100 countries operating in 69 languages (Stencel, Ryan & Luther, 2023). According to the Duke Reporters' Lab, half of the world's fact checkers are associated with media outlets, but there are also 24 affiliated with academic institutions. Although the work is time consuming and resource intensive, fact-checking has increasingly been introduced to journalism programmes at universities and in professional settings. This expert article brings together some insights from a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Journalism Education Council (WJEC) roundtable event 'Fact-Check and Verification as Core Journalism Curriculum' hosted by RMIT University in Australia in 2021, alongside relevant literature exploring the nature and presence of fact-check based education approaches at that time. It concludes that while fact-checking and verification are important skills for student journalists, fact checkers do not necessarily need to be journalists, nor indeed have journalistic training. However, more students are needed who are excellent journalists and the authors argue that fact-checking is just part of that training.

Keywords: Asia Pacific, Australia, education, fact-check, fake news, journalism education, verification, WJEC

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Introduction

ALTHOUGH there is nothing new about facts, nor the desire for journalists to impart them, the sub-discipline of fact-checking—as a specific practice that goes beyond the basic act of confirming information when researching a news story in a 'post-truth' world—is only slowly being embraced by journalism educators. This article sets out to capture information about how fact-checking was being taught within universities in 2021, with a particular emphasis on fact-checking in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. It further sought to determine what fact checking skills and knowledge were considered most important for educators to impart to journalism majors.

This article draws upon a curated discussion focussed on the Asia Pacific region organised for a World Journalism Education Congress roundtable. The focus of the roundtable was journalism education within universities. The speakers included educators, researchers, and one employer identified by the host (co-author Alexandra Wake). Wake explained that RMIT University has a strong interest in fact-checking and verification, mandating a course, Fact Checking and Verification, for all students majoring in journalism. The subject was also an open elective to anyone within the university. Further RMIT students were able to intern at the RMIT ABC Fact Check Unit¹ or its affiliate RMIT FactLab to further sharpen their skills.

Participant presentations

Australian researcher Tanya Notley outlined her team's work around Young People and Adult Media Literacy in Australia (2020). She asked, how do we ensure that citizens are not being manipulated by misinformation actors? How do we ensure that they are asking critical questions about information and sources? Saffron Howden, spoke to the theme of teaching children to be information detectives from her 2021 book *Kid Reporter* as 'News Detective' Skills. Howden argued that the traditional journalism skills of curiosity and scepticism, asking lots of questions and striving for accuracy, were great tools for teaching young people to verify information themselves and to improve their media literacy. Jay Daniel Thompson, spoke about his 2022 book co-authored (with Rob Cover and Ashleigh Haw) book *Fake News in Digital Cultures* and asked what ethical online communication might look like in an era of digital hostility and network disinformation. He said the greatest challenge was how to verify the information produced and disseminated by certain movements as ethically as possible.

Kieran McGuinness, from the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra, spoke about verification behaviours and how to solve the problem of passive engagement with news. He drew on a series of Digital News Reports done by the University of Canberra to discuss verification behaviour by journalists as well as concerns about trust and misinformation and verification from Australian audiences. Jane A. Wardell, the global desk editor at Reuters, spoke for the industry about the importance of instilling fact-checking and verification skills in student journalists, and veteran journalists, saying it was absolutely critical in the current environment. Wardell argued that fact-checking needed to be considered a key skill, and near the top of any curriculum list, undertaken by journalism students.

Journalism educator Masato Kajimoto, from the University of Hong Kong, spoke about his work teaching fact-checking at his university and specifically the Annie Lab, a student driven fact-checking project. He said his course was essentially a half fact-checking, and half news literacy class. He said he did not

approach his classes as vocational training courses. He said he was trying to train the future news audience rather than just future journalists in logical reasoning, analytical skills and effective writing. Anne Kruger, from First Draft ², spoke about delivering professional practitioner-level verification courses to university students. First Draft is a not-for-profit organisation based in New York, focused on the communities that have been targeted by misinformation and disinformation. In Australia, First Draft has a large focus on the diverse and ethnic communities that have been targeted by disinformation campaigns. Her work was centred on trying to protect the communities and empower the communities from dangerous narratives. Sushi Das, from RMIT ABC Fact Check Unit, spoke about the unit's collaboration by RMIT University and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Das discussed a fact check micro credential (online course) she created for RMIT students regardless of their disciplinary background. Her essential fact-checking 101 course took 90-minutes online and gives the students a digital badge that they can attach to their social media accounts so that prospective employers know that they have practical fact-checking skills gained at a university with the endorsement of the national broadcaster. Das argued that employers, not just employers in journalism, wanted to hire people with fact-checking skills who could navigate the internet, particularly social media, and be able to distinguish between reliable, accurate sources of information and harmful misleading false information—an important life skill for everyone.

Syed Nazakat, from DataLEADS, discussed best approaches and practices in teaching fact-checking in India to health professionals. Nazakat spoke about his training work with doctors, helping them to work with journalists to fact-check and correct health information during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eoghan Sweeney, founder of OSINT Essentials, spoke about embedding the essential skills of fact checking and verification with journalists and media organisations. Eoghan said newsrooms needed to clearly appreciate that their work stood not only on the quality of their reporting, but also on the ability of their audience to properly understand it. It was not patronising or elitist to acknowledge that large sections of the public had been significantly manipulated and undermined. Gordon Farrer, who established the Fact Checking and Verification course at RMIT University, spoke about the importance of creative thinking in fact checking and verification. He argued fact-checking and verification required not only observation, organisation, and persistence, but imagination, left-field and creative thinking.

Ash Rahmani, from the Cal State University system in the US spoke about the politics of fact-checking using examples from US-based Spanish language mis-information). He noted that little attention had been paid to misinformation in languages other than English and in the US, after English, Spanish was the most used language on social media.

The roundtable event finished with a provocation from Tito Ambyo, from

RMIT University, who spoke about Otherness and challenged the audience to consider, what is meant when we say ‘facts’? He argued that academics need to train students to ask the question, ‘whose fact is this’? Where is it coming from? And who produced this fact? In a complex society, he argued, a three-year undergraduate degree made sense, because students needed to have the time to be able to think about these critical issues.

Questions

Three questions were posed: what are universities already doing in the fact-checking and verification space? What are the issues surrounding fact-checking and verification not currently captured within curriculum? What do employers want graduates in the Asia Pacific to know about fact-checking and verification?

What is Fact-Checking?

It was important to start with a clear definition for ‘fact-checking’. Graves (2018) argues there is an important difference between the process of checking one’s facts, that is, to eliminate errors from a story, and the rise of ‘fact-checking’ as a distinct mode of journalism. Graves notes there is some dispute over the contemporary meaning of fact-checking but points to the following (abbreviated) definition from Elizabeth (2014, n.p.) as a guide: ‘Fact checkers and fact checking organisations aim to increase knowledge by re-reporting and researching the purported facts’. The important distinction here relates to the re-examination of existing purported facts as opposed to the process of verifying new information. Bruns (2018, p. 356) notes that the rise of fact checking can best be understood as a response to an ‘authority crisis’ where the vast quantities of information available on the internet—especially user-generated content lacking the journalistic vigour of verification—has bypassed the traditional role of the media as a gatekeeper of information. In addition, the vast quantities of online misinformation and disinformation have led to what is termed by some as the ‘post-truth’ era where the very nature of truth is under question. To combat this uncertainty and the many challenges it poses to democracy, an organised community of fact-checkers came together and sought to develop common standards and practices in an attempt to regain journalistic authority. In this context, fact-checking can be understood as a distinct discipline with its own cultures of practice responding to the specific threat of the post-truth era (Graves, 2018). Thus, these distinctions from other forms of journalism call for students to be educated with a specific skill set related to fact-checking.

Farrer (2017) argues there are also philosophical and epistemological dimensions to fact checking that demand the specific focus of journalism educators. The practice of fact-checking necessarily requires the journalist to reach a ‘conclusion about truth’ (n. p.). This is not meant to imply fact-checking journalists take a

position on an issue (ie, that they are supporting a political/moral position) but rather that they assume for themselves a role of investigator and judge of the accuracy/correctness of a statement that makes a claim about a factual component of an issue. Fact-checking organisations such as RMIT ABC Fact Check adjudicate on the correctness of a public figure’s statement using a range of rulings, from (for example, ‘checks out’, ‘In the ballpark’, ‘Incorrect’).

In journalism classes, students have traditionally been encouraged to not take a position on an issue. Rather, they are taught to summarise opposing viewpoints, giving equal weight to contesting ideas to create ‘balance’. But Farrer says this approach is problematic and can lend a false sense of legitimacy to mistruths if taken at face value. While taking a position in journalism is not unique to the practice of fact-checking (for example opinion pieces or investigative reports that reveal/conclude that corruption or malpractice has taken place) it does serve as an important vector for journalism educators to consider the practices of journalism more broadly. This section does not suggest that adjudicating on accuracy/correctness of claims by a fact-checker requires disclosing a position on the issue at hand (as in support for/opposition to it) or adopting it as their ‘subjective possession’. There is as little ‘self’ in political fact-checking practice as in other objective/balanced forms of news/political journalisms. In fact, there is probably less, given the transparency of investigative methodology and sources used required of accredited (by the IFCN) fact-checking practice.

Fact-checking does more than make available a new approach to verification in journalism. Moreover, from a practical perspective, fact-checking is an identified in-demand skillset sought by employers (Das, 2021; Wardell, 2021). To meet this demand and best prepare students to enter the workforce, there is a clear rationale to educate students with specific and identifiable skills in the processes of fact-checking. Interestingly, despite the prevalence of fact-checking in the news media mix and the demand from employers, fact-checking-specific courses appear to be relatively rare. There are several compelling examples across the world of how fact-checking is being taught in schools, universities and the professional context. However, for the most part, the courses appear to be rare and concentrated in certain areas and institutions. There are some notable limitations in this assessment—namely that a lack of literature relating to fact checking specific university courses may not necessarily signal its absence within programmes. Furthermore, it is not clear to what degree these skills may be embedded into more generalised courses, whether the conception of ‘fact checking’ includes verification and/or debunking, or what specific skills are being taught.

Fact-checking within universities

University journalism educators are constantly adapting course content to prepare students for success in a rapidly evolving digital and often challenging

environment (Callaghan & McManus, 2010). The emergence of dedicated fact checking courses within universities is the latest in those curriculum adaptations.

In Hong Kong, one of the earliest examples referenced in the literature is at the University of Hong Kong. In a paper titled: '*Ahead of the e-Curve in Fact-Checking and Verification Education: The University of Hong Kong's Cyber News Verification Lab Leads Verification Education in Asia*', Kruger (2016) discussed the curriculum design of a project designed to develop undergraduate journalism students' skills in online verification and fact-checking. The objective of the Lab was twofold, firstly to teach students to 'identify, analyse and deconstruct real-life case studies emanating in real-time from online sources' and secondly to 'evaluate and report on their findings in a journalistic manner' (n. p.). According to Kruger, the project sought to educate students through 'experiential learning' (n. p.) as defined by Kolb (1984, p. 41) as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience'. Experiential learning focuses on the development of real-world practical skills, in this case, several assignments utilising a software platform called 'the Check', developed by Meedan. Following classes and lectures relating to news literacy, online verification and fact checking, students were able to apply this knowledge by collectively uploading content sourced from social media and other news sources to the platform, outlining the steps they took to verify the information present (Kruger, 2016).

One of the ideas explored in the paper is the development of a scale to measure the outcomes of students' learning. Kruger (2016) notes that media literacy is a well-established area of research but identifies a need for a scale that accounts for 'news literacy competencies and critical thinking skills in a digital native, participatory, "post-truth" era' (n.p.). Following consultation with media experts, a 'verification measurement scale' (n. p.) from 0-4 was developed. The scale evaluated five key areas including technical skills, observation skills, the student's ability to question the motive behind sources, the extent to which secondary 'crosscheck' sources were used and whether contact was made with the original publisher of the information. At the end of the semester, students were asked to list steps they would have undertaken to verify an online source before and after the coursework. A content analysis of the student's responses was then conducted, and the verification measurement scale was applied by the instructor. Through these findings, Kruger concluded there had been a significant improvement in the quality of verification techniques and critical thinking actions by students because of the project.

Following the Cyber News Verification Lab project, a subsequent student-led fact-checking lab was established at the University of Hong Kong. Speaking at the UNESCO WJEC roundtable event, Associate Professor Masato Kajimoto (2021) explained that the 'Annie Lab' offered students a hands-on

learning experience in a newsroom environment. For some students, this is offered through an undergraduate capstone subject, while others are offered paid summer internships. The lab functions as a newsroom throughout the week and publishes regular student-produced fact-checking content on its website. This practical learning is delivered alongside two classroom-based optional elective fact-checking subjects. The undergraduate subject is offered to all students and the graduate subject is offered to journalism students only.

One of the important themes raised in Kajimoto's discussion were some of the regionally specific challenges that exist in teaching fact checking and journalism more broadly. Despite strong demand to teach fact-checking in some regions of South-East Asia where the democratic model is either failing or absent, university educators must account for differences in the way syllabi are designed. For example, terminology such as 'democracy' or 'citizenship' that may be ubiquitously found in Western journalism course content may not be appropriate. In countries which are outside the liberal democratic tradition, the existence of fact-checking, and verification courses raises the question of their purpose or motivation. Is the intention to spread democratic ideals through the practice of fact-checking to 'hold power to account' or is it for another reason. This could be a useful question for academic inquiry.

Furthermore, Kajimoto noted the challenges associated with the proliferation of misinformation on regionally and language-specific social media platforms. He argued, this presented opportunities for the Annie Lab and international universities more broadly. With access to significant numbers of bilingual students trained in the skills of fact-checking, the lab is uniquely placed to translate content efficiently and reliably in a way that most newsrooms would not have the capacity for. These factors demonstrate that there are both challenges and opportunities present in regional differences and emphasises the important role of international dialogue and cooperation between journalism university educators.

In Australia, where this article has been developed, there is little evidence in the form of literature to suggest that fact-checking is being taught at the 28 universities which offer journalism programmes. However, at the Royal Melbourne Institute for Technology (RMIT) a strong focus has been placed on developing the skills of fact-checking in the journalism cohort. In 2016, fact-checking skills were introduced as a four-week module within a larger course, Journalism Technologies, with an assignment called, Fact Check Your Mother, established by lecturer Tito Ambyo (Little, 2017). In 2018, RMIT introduced Fact-Checking & Verification, an innovative subject dedicated to introducing students to issues around misinformation and disinformation, and to teaching the fact-checking and verification skills to deal with them. The subject, developed and led by Farrer, is taught in the first year of RMIT's Bachelor of Communication (Journalism) programme and, unlike the University of Hong Kong's elective coursework, it is

compulsory for all journalism students. Farrer (2021) told the UNESCO round table event; his course has a strong focus on the technical skills of verification using open-source intelligence (OSINT). In essence, this involves using publicly available information (for example google maps, databases, or reverse images searches) to either verify or debunk claims and user-generated content (such as images and video) shared on social media. Farrer argued OSINT is one of the most powerful investigative tools available to fact-checkers and journalists more broadly and represents the ‘future of journalism’. He also stressed that the constantly evolving nature of these tools means the most important educational outcome of OSINT-focused education is not the knowledge of a particular system or method, rather it is a student’s ability to think creatively about the meaning of information and to strategise an investigative approach accordingly.

RMIT also offers internships to students at the RMIT ABC Fact Check, a newsroom embedded in RMIT’s School of Media and Communication. Fact Check is a joint publishing venture between RMIT and the national publicly funded broadcaster the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Fact Check publishes its work via the ABC’s digital news platform and as a result makes a significant contribution towards political discourse in Australia via its large national audience. As an IFCN-accredited fact-checking unit, the relationship between RMIT and the ABC is unique in the Australian context (Das 2021). It also offers valuable insights into the potential benefits afforded by such a close working relationship between educational institutions and media organisations. The benefits offered to students in this relationship are clear. As established by Kruger (2016), experiential learning offers students hands-on experience increasing their chances of employability following graduation. There are also significant benefits for the media organisation itself, as such partnerships that help to provide the significant resources required to successfully run a fact-check unit, a common challenge faced by fact checking organisations.

A search of the scant academic literature uncovered a controversial fact checking teaching project in Spain, detailed in the paper ‘Fact-Checking Skills and Project-Based Learning About Infodemic and Disinformation’ (Pérez-Escolará, Ordóñez-Olmedoa & Alcaide-Pulidob, 2021). The project sought to: ‘rais[e] awareness of the risks of disinformation and infodemic, as well as identify the main social competencies and skills related to fact-checking that students should acquire’ (n. p.). The authors emphasised the importance of teaching fact-checking as a process that begins with the preemptive stages of monitoring and spotting misinformation. Like other approaches referenced earlier, the researchers promote a practical approach to students learning. In this case, a ‘Project Based Learning’ (PBL) and ‘thematic-experiential classes’ (n. p.) approach is described by the author. In practice, this involved presenting a lecture to communications students in two Spanish universities which contained false

information about COVID-19. Students were unaware that this was occurring and were later asked to write an essay summarising the information from the lecture. After reviewing the essays, the researchers concluded that only about 14 percent of students identified the information as false and corrected it in their essays. They were also able to determine that certain types of mistruths were more readily accepted by the students. For example, students were much more likely to accept mistruths about the impact of coronavirus as opposed to misinformation around COVID-19 remedies. The study notes the project did receive ethics approval and was conducted in a controlled environment (a university). However, there are some questions raised by this approach. While the study rightfully highlights the need for students to approach sources with a critical mindset—it is unclear whether there could be risks associated with the practice of intentionally circulating misinformation, even if it is later corrected. Furthermore, prominent fact-checking methodologies, such as the one referenced within the study developed by Mantzarlis (2018), emphasise the importance of relying on trusted sources as the basis for fact-checking. In the context of the ‘post-truth’ information overload, it’s unclear whether such an experiment could have the unintended consequence of eroding trust within students from trusted sources, in this case, their university. With these questions in mind, there is a clear rationale to develop best practice international guidelines on fact check education to alleviate any perceived or actual concerns.

Other fact-checking education

Fact-checking education does occur in a variety of ways outside of the journalism curriculum, such as internships or via short courses attached to the multiple fact-check units and journalism education providers such as the Poynter Institute.

In the United States, for example, students in general civics courses are introduced to the idea of ‘lateral reading’. Brodsky et al., (2021, n. p.) offer the following definition:

Lateral reading offers a way for students to act on awareness and scepticism fostered through media and news literacy interventions by leaving the original messages in order to investigate sources and verify claims. (Brodsky et al., 2021)

In their paper titled ‘Improving college students’ fact checking strategies through lateral reading instruction in a general education civics course’, the authors outline a process taught to students to improve their ability to critically analyse online sources (Brodsky et al., 2021). This process is derived from Caulfield’s (2017) book *Web Literacy for Student Fact Checkers*. This process, alongside other material, was integrated into the curriculum of first-year general education civics courses across several US universities. To evaluate students’ progress,

several assignments and questionnaires were conducted before and after the content was delivered, alongside a control group who completed regular coursework. The authors concluded that students who were taught fact-checking skills were ‘more likely to read laterally and accurately assess the trustworthiness of online content’ than their peers in the control group.

In Australia, skills in fact-checking are also being taught outside of the context of journalism. At RMIT, this content is offered to all enrolled students regardless of their degree in the format of a short online ‘micro-credential’, which covers the basics of fact-checking. The course is available to all students free of cost as an optional extra. Completion of the course earns students a digital badge which can be added to resumes and shown to future prospective employers. According to Sushi Das, chief-of-staff at RMIT ABC Fact Check and developer of the credential, the course is aimed at all students in recognition of fact-checking and online verification being an in-demand skillset across many industries beyond the realm of journalism. It also accounts for the importance of news literacy, that is, an aptitude for the critical consumption of news, as compared to its production (Das, 2021).

In Hong Kong, this philosophy of teaching fact-checking outside of the journalistic context can also be found at the University of Hong Kong where Kajimoto teaches a university-wide undergraduate elective course combining news literacy and fact-checking skills. Speaking at the roundtable event, Kajimoto (2021) noted: ‘What we are trying to do is to train the future news audience rather than future journalists in logical reasoning and analytical skills and effective writing . . . this is a skill that everybody should learn’. These examples demonstrate the transferability of fact-checking skills across a wide spectrum of industries and their desirability from the perspective of educators and employers alike.

Professional development

Fact-checking is being introduced to newsrooms around the world, but research has found that few journalists feel confident in their skills. When asked by First Draft, a not-for-profit research organisation focused on combatting misinformation, if they had adequate training and support to deal with misinformation and disinformation campaigns, just 14.1 percent of surveyed journalists answered ‘yes’. Similar results were recorded in New Zealand and the Pacific region (Kruger, 2021). Speaking at the roundtable event, Kruger identified a particular need for ongoing support and training for journalists in this space. In response, First Draft has developed several initiatives that provide support to journalists to continuously expand their fact-checking skillset. One example is ‘cross-check’ a collaborative information-sharing programme bringing together 110 journalists from a range of media organisations. Journalists are provided ongoing training on how to report on misinformation effectively and ethically by First Draft’s

researchers and are also invited to participate in virtual misinformation crisis simulations and information sharing on an ongoing basis via Slack—an online messaging service. Regular research output from First Draft is also disseminated through these channels. Kruger notes that it is in the absence of proper and reliable information that false narratives often flourish. This factor is most apparent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic where rapid developments and a lack of scientific research can leave an information gap that is instead filled with misinformation. Thus, Kruger argues that fact-checkers and journalists more broadly must take on a pre-emptive role in identifying where information gaps may be forming and filling this reputable information. By identifying, sharing, and centralising information sources across journalist networks, First Draft aims to provide journalists with greater support and training in this practice.

Google News Initiative training (Google, 2022) is also very active globally, not only offering online content but in-person workshops on request to students and working journalists in local newsrooms, large and small. Such training includes, but is not limited to, advanced search skills and use of Google maps/earth platforms. These sessions focus on Google tools, although not exclusively, are vital to OSINT AND FCnV journalism. A focus on collaboration is also present in the work of Data Leads, a digital media and information initiative based in India. Presenting at the UNESCO roundtable event, Nazakat (2021) identified the problem of misinformation to be particularly acute in India where media literacy is typically low but access to the internet is rapidly expanding. In the face of this challenge, Nazakat emphasised the importance of collaboration not just among journalists—but also across experts in other professions. In 2015, Data Leads held boot camp training sessions hosting both journalists and doctors to collaboratively design more effective strategies of fact-checking and addressing medical misinformation. This project has since evolved to encompass a network of doctors spanning 30 countries and has played an important role in addressing COVID-19 related misinformation across Asia. According to Nazakat, this experience demonstrated the need for a broader and more effective fact-checking and training network in India. Supported by the Google News Initiative, the India Training Network was established in 2018 and has since trained over 1300 newsrooms and 700 universities in fact checking. Since 2018, fact checking has flourished in India going from about five fact-check organisations to many hundreds in the present day. The sheer scale of the Indian experience illustrates the huge challenges of tackling misinformation on the Asian continent but also shows how innovative professional training partnerships can provide some solutions.

In a post truth world

There's a need to address the challenge that the audience for information is

increasingly divided between those who respect and seek out fact and expertise in order to make informed decisions, and those for whom emotion is the driving force behind decision and opinion-making and their understanding of the world (particularly in the US where communities are fundamentally epistemologically different—they don't operate with a common set of facts) (Martel, Pennycook, & Rand, 2020; Ecker, Lewandowsky, Cook, et al, 2020).

Journalism—that is, 'quality' journalism that makes claims to trustworthiness based on its adherence to fact, impartiality, and transparency—is not an effective counter to emotion. (To deliberately misquote Ben Shapiro (2019): 'Feelings don't care about your facts'.) That is, the critical thinking skills and tools identified here as crucial to good journalism practice—those skills and tools argued here as essential to journalism education—must also be foundational to all education programmes delivered to all students at all levels.

Conclusion

The dangers associated with misinformation and its corrosive impact on democracy are well documented, discussed and researched. Yet, a review of the relevant literature suggests these skills are rarely specifically taught in educational facilities, and media professionals feel unprepared to deal with the challenge. Where these skills are being taught clear and tangible benefits can be identified. For students of journalism, it provides the relevant skills to prepare them to produce the in-demand product of fact-checks. For university students more broadly, it can promote the widely applicable skills of critical analysis and creative thinking. There is also evidence that innovative partnerships between big tech, universities and media organisations can provide an avenue to support the struggling news media industry.

Note

1. While this article was in review the ABC announced a plan to end its seven-year partnership with RMIT University, known as ABC RMIT Fact Check, and replace it with an in-house unit called ABC News Verify in June 2024. The announcement came after a sustained attack on the RMIT Fact Lab from sections of the conservative press in Australia over fact-checking done during the referendum on the inclusion of Indigenous people in the Australian constitution.
2. First Draft closed in 2022 and staff went to the newly formed Information Futures Lab at Brown University in the US. The APAC staff have retained the name CrossCheck (named after the collaborative programmes First Draft ran) and are affiliated with the Information Futures Lab.

Resource

RMIT's Gordon Farrer has prepared the following primer for students in his Fact Checking and Verification course. It is a work in progress that he is happy to share| Tw: @post_fact RMIT Resource: Getting into Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)

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