

IN FOCUS

# FAKE NEWS

by Kari A. Cornell





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# TIMELINE

**1690**

Benjamin Harris prints the first newspaper in the American colonies. It is called *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestick*. Authorities in Boston, Massachusetts, shut down the paper.

**1791**

The First Amendment to the US Constitution is adopted. It protects a person's right to free speech and press.

1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

**1790s**

The *National Gazette* and *Gazette of the United States* publish fake news stories.

**1926**

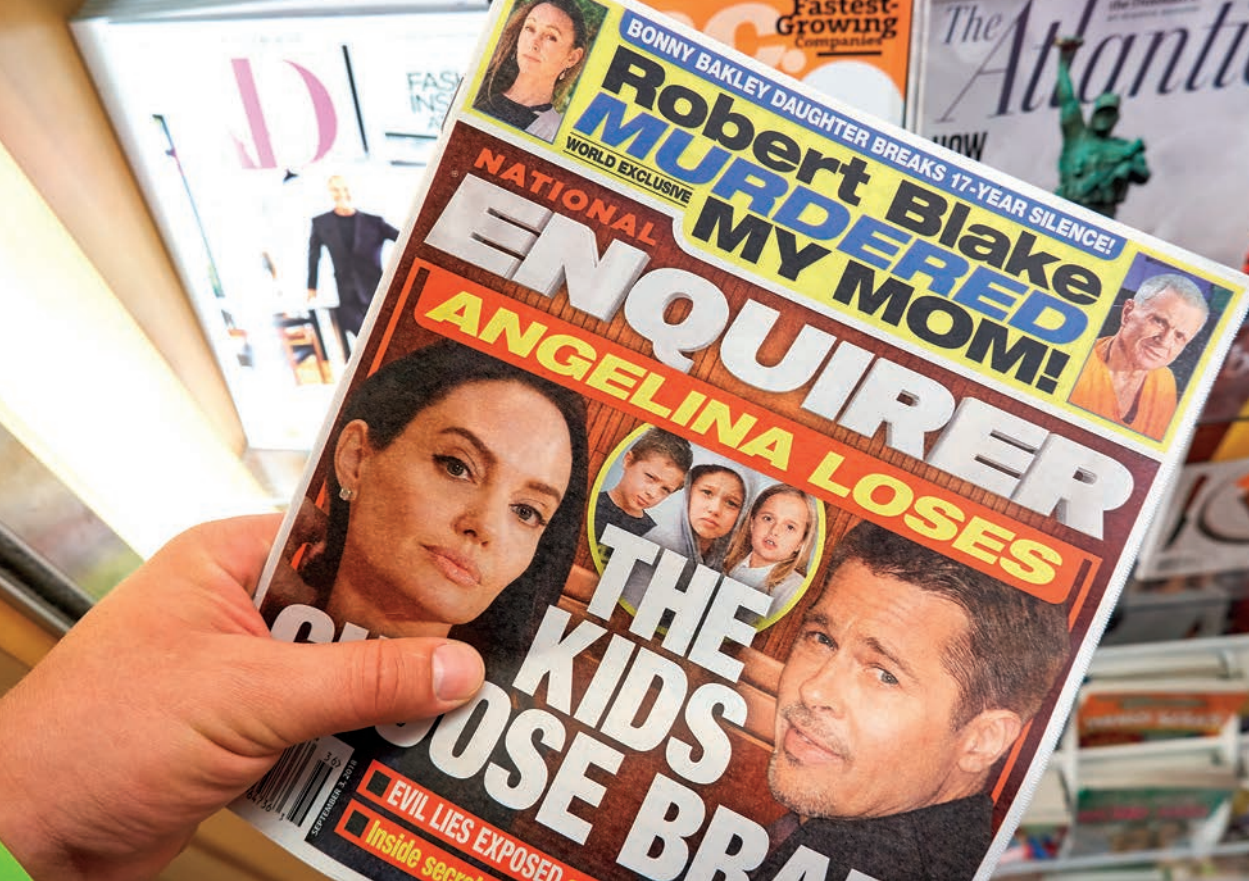
The Society of Professional Journalists publishes the first Journalism Code of Ethics. This is a guide for journalists. It requires that illustrations, interviews, and quotes in newspapers be truthful.



# WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?

**T**he term *fake news* describes media that appears to come from real news outlets but is made up. It also refers to stories that are exaggerated. **Conspiracy theories** are one type of fake news. These are beliefs that powerful organizations are secretly causing certain events.





*Some news sources use shocking and exaggerated headlines to attract readers.*

Some politicians use the term incorrectly.

They call news they do not like or agree with “fake news.” Trump used the term often in speeches and interviews. He also used it in social media posts. The term is



***A man protests Fox News at a rally in North Carolina in 2014.***

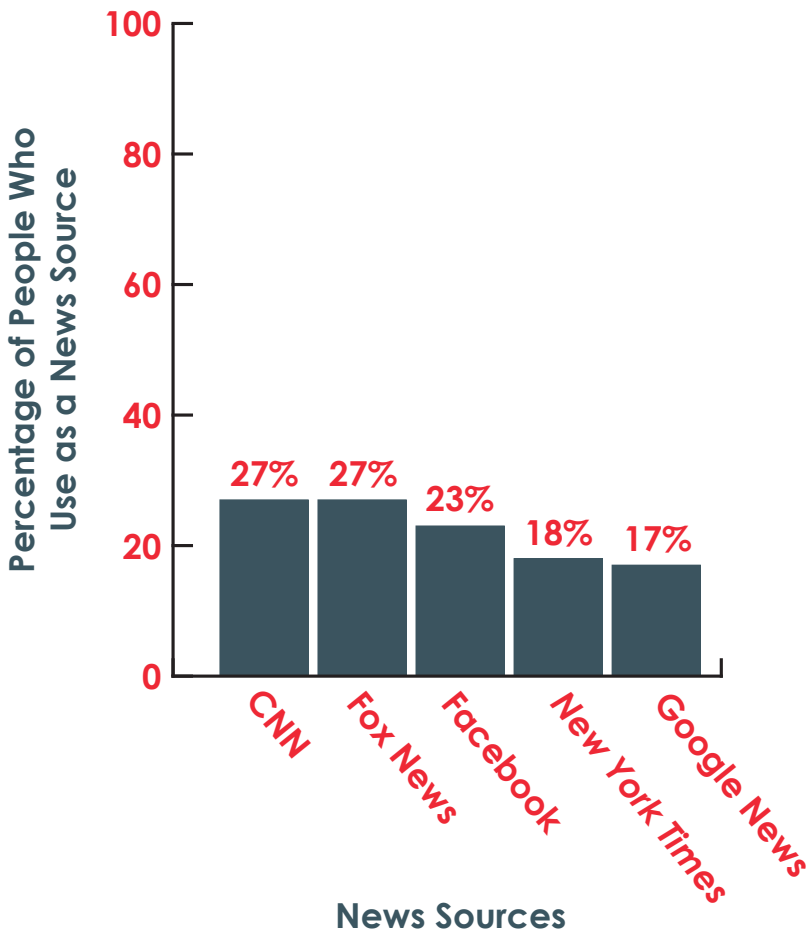
often overused. Many people are confused about its meaning. In a 2018 survey, 51 percent of Americans defined fake news as any news politicians do not agree with.

## THE BEGINNING OF FAKE NEWS

People have been publishing fake news stories for many years. Broad­sides were published in the American **colonies** beginning in the 1640s. Broad­sides were like posters. They were single sheets of paper with print on one side. They announced the news. They also contained songs and illustrations. They were distributed throughout a town or city.

Broad­sides built support for people in power. The news reports were often biased. **Bias** is the favoring of one view over another. Reports were influenced by





*This graph shows the most popular news sources among Americans in 2017.*

support these news organizations. The companies may control what these media outlets report.

# GLOSSARY

**algorithms**

instructions that help a computer solve a problem

**allied**

partnered with someone or something

**amendments**

changes or additions to an existing law

**bias**

an author's opinion or point of view that shapes the way an article or post is written

**censor**

to make media content unavailable to the public

**colonies**

settlements on land owned by a faraway country or nation

**conspiracy theories**

beliefs that powerful organizations are secretly causing certain events

**media literacy**

the ability to study and evaluate media

**viral**

something that spreads quickly and becomes popular

# SOURCE NOTES

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