

# Verification before publication prevents many issues

## Resources:

- **Toward a new journalism with verification**  
<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100292/Toward-a-New-Journalism-With-Verification.aspx>
- **And now, the unedited, unfiltered news**  
<http://www.journalism.org/node/354>
- **The principle of verification**  
<http://www3.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=660302>
- **Developing methods of verification**  
<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/developing-methods-verification>
- **Basics of reporting**  
<http://www.jprof.com/courses/jem230/230lecture-basicsofreporting.html>
- **Twitter journalism and tweet verification**  
<http://media.twitter.com/257/twitter-journalism>

**JEA Scholastic Press  
Rights Commission**

**B**ecause student media's credibility is often challenged for a variety of reasons, it is important its reporters and editors know journalistic standards for verification of information gathered in live interviews and in research. Knowing this process is also important when it comes to understanding prior review and its impact on scholastic journalism.

A major way for scholastic journalists to establish their credibility – and this is the most important characteristic they have – is to be able to show the accuracy, completeness and reliability of their sources.

Verification of information tells the audience that the information presented is reliable or at least comes from sources the reporter thought were the most authoritative and knowledgeable and not just part of the reporter's own views or imagination.

Verification must be evident whether it comes from legacy media – print and broadcast – or journalists using social or online media.

Bill Kovach wrote it Nieman Reports, speaking about verification, "As Walter Lippmann said more than 80 years ago: Citizens in a democracy do not act on reality but on the picture of reality that is in their minds. Most of the guiding principles of journalism are shaped by this concept. As an organizing principle for newsroom values it has served democracy well. But the world has slipped beyond the reach of the light Walter Lippmann cast. Today we live in a media world in which competing interests are creating realities designed to encourage communities of consumers, communities of belief, and communities of allegiance. It is in this environment that a journalism of verification must find its place by using these new technologies

to support communities of independent thought."

### Some key points for the use of live sources:

- It is not prior review of a student reporter to verify information with a source by reading comments and information back before leaving the interview and without showing a source the article, in draft or final form or information from others.
- On the other hand, showing a source a draft or finished article or sharing others' quote or comments before publication is prior review.
- Journalistic principles stipulate no one outside the paper staff and the adviser should see publication contents before distribution.
- Handing over the copy or the notes indicates the source has the right and power to edit the publication and that is not journalistically acceptable.
- Sharing a quote with its source after the article is published, but not information or quotes from others, is acceptable. Reporters should not, however, share their notes.
- Sources should never see copy before it is published; it's an invitation to a source to edit it. Sources should never see notes for a story, only what is ultimately published. Interviews are confidential. Sources should never know what other sources were interviewed for a story or what they said before the story is published.

Some key points for non-live resources:  
Knowing how to verify information



“ Reporters, and this should go without saying, should keep a recorded – by paper or electronic method – notes of the interview.

## Resources:

- **Online journalism blog**  
<http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2011/01/26/verifying-information-online-content-context-code/>
- **The challenge of verifying crowdsourced information**  
[http://www.cjr.org/behind\\_the\\_news/the\\_challenge\\_of\\_verifying\\_cro.php](http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/the_challenge_of_verifying_cro.php)
- **Exploring truth in 'journalism'**  
[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2010/02/12/exploring\\_truth\\_in\\_journalism/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2010/02/12/exploring_truth_in_journalism/)
- **Critical evaluation of information sources**  
<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/findarticles/credibility.html>
- **The Good, the bad and the ugly**  
<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html>

said before the story is published.

### Some key points for non-live resources:

Knowing how to verify information from the Internet – and hence material from social media – starts with The Good, The Bad and the Ugly.

Not the movie, but an excellent set of guidelines and examples from the University of New Mexico library prepared by Susan E. Beck, head of the Humanities and Social Sciences Services Department and last updated in 2009.

For example, Beck cites these basic criteria for verification of information and then gives examples and links so students and advisers can practice:

- Accuracy
- Authority
- Objectivity
- Currency
- Coverage

### Other recommendations:

- Develop a written policy about the interview process.
- Urge reporters to keep their notes so they can verify what they reported. They should keep these notes or files outside school.
- In case there is anticipation of a controversial interview, bring a recorder, bring a witness or both.
- A source must know the interview is being electronically recorded, must approve it and has the right to refuse to be recorded.
- Some staffs, after reading back

quotes, will ask the source to sign a statement that verifies the information from the interview.

- Reporters, and this should go without saying, should keep recorded – by paper or electronic method – notes of the interview.
- Reporters could have a source sign a form at the end of the interview verifying when and where they were interviewed, and more importantly documenting that the reporter was taking notes during the interview.
- Reporters could, on request, show the source his or her quote to be used. If the source cleans up a minor grammar issue, the staff should have a policy on how to deal with that. Do not seem to ask for the source's "approval" of quotes. If he or she said something controversial, decide, in a previously established policy, whether the students would still use it. Be prepared to hold the line on that it.

### Subjects who claim they were misquoted tend to do so for several reasons:

1. They were actually misquoted, recently or at some time.
2. What they said was so inarticulate and garbled that when the reporter cleaned it up it sounded unlike the subject.
3. They were embarrassed by their quote and want to distance themselves from it by blaming the reporter.
4. They weren't actually misquoted but are upset that the story didn't include what they wanted it to (or

“ They weren’t actually misquoted but are upset that the story didn’t include what they wanted it to (or thought it should). Sometimes, they say their quote was taken out of context. What they really mean is “Yes, I said that, but you didn’t include X, Y or Z.”

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5. They thought they were misquoted but simply don’t remember what they said.

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