

Digital Literacy: Skills to Survive in the Digital Age

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Overview

Digital Literacy – Abilities/Competencies/Skills for the Information Age

- Information Sources
- Managing/Coping with Technology
- Analyzing Information

Citizens of the Digital Age

The “Information Age”

Greater access to information than before

We are not always prepared to use these information sources wisely

New skills are needed

Citizens of the Digital Age

Digital Literacy

The set of competencies/abilities required for full participation in a knowledge or information-based society

Sources of information - not only books, newspapers, magazines, TV and radio, but also to the Internet, Internet blogs, social media, and video games



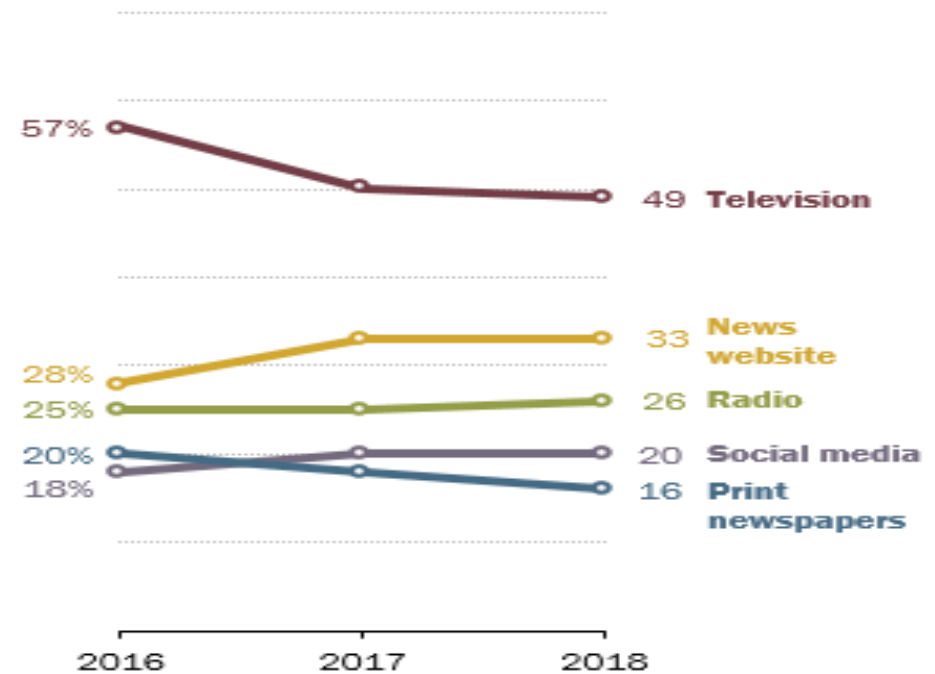
Information Sources

News by source:

- Television
- News websites
- Radio
- Social media
- Print newspapers

More Americans get news often from social media than print newspapers

% of U.S. adults who get news *often* on each platform

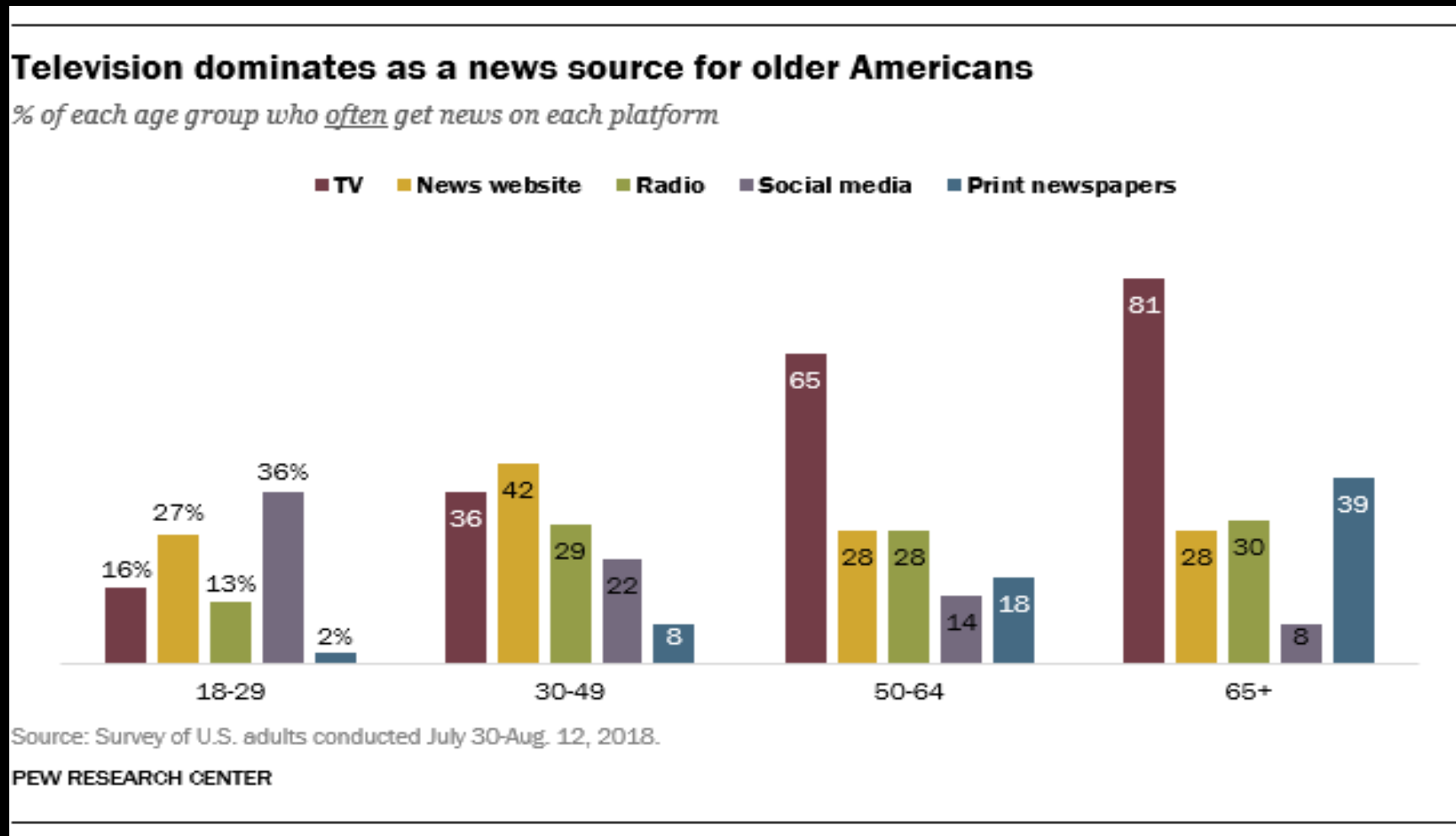


Note: The difference between social media and print newspapers in 2017 was not statistically significant.
Source: Survey conducted July 30-Aug. 12, 2018.

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Information Sources

News by age group:

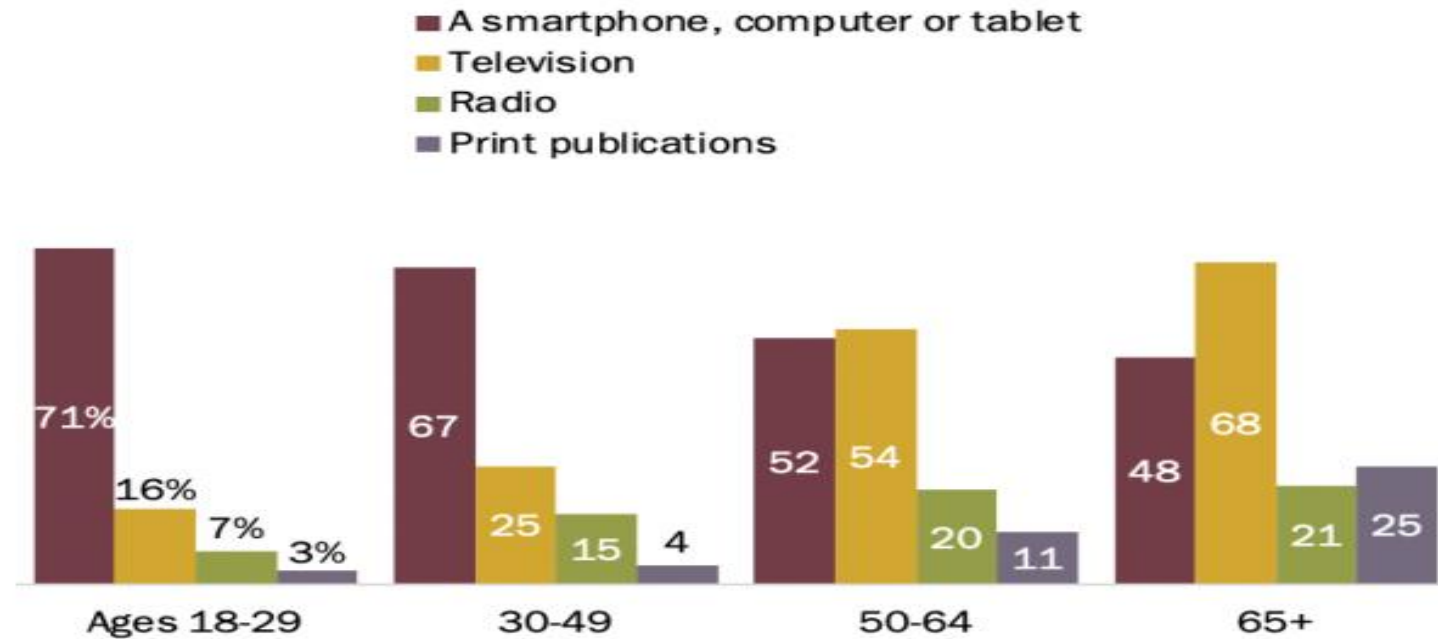


Information Sources

News From Digital Devices

Those under 50 turn more frequently to digital devices for news

% of U.S. adults who get news often from ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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Information Sources

TV and Radio: **Commercial**



Over-the-air broadcast (TV and radio):
ad-supported

Pay TV (cable or satellite):
subscription + advertising

Information Sources

TV and Radio: **Noncommercial**

Governmental access:

Fairfax County Government Channel 16

Educational access:

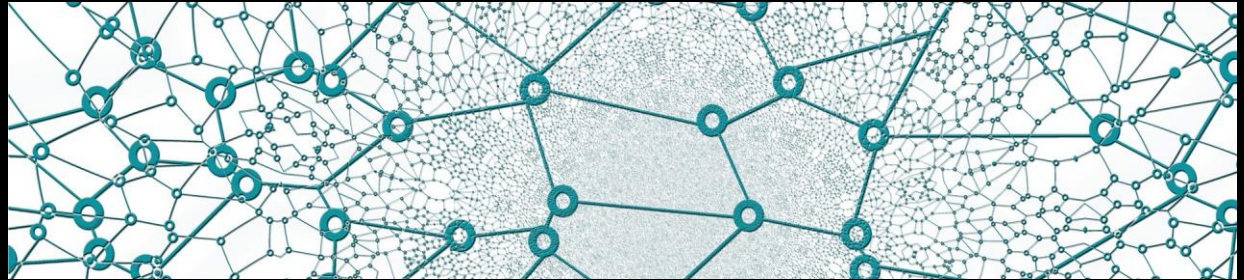
public schools, George Mason, NoVa

Public access: FCAC (Fairfax Public Access)

National: Public Broadcasting Service (PBS, NPR)

Information Sources

Internet - information



Web sites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, etc.

Advantages- Immediacy and world-wide reach

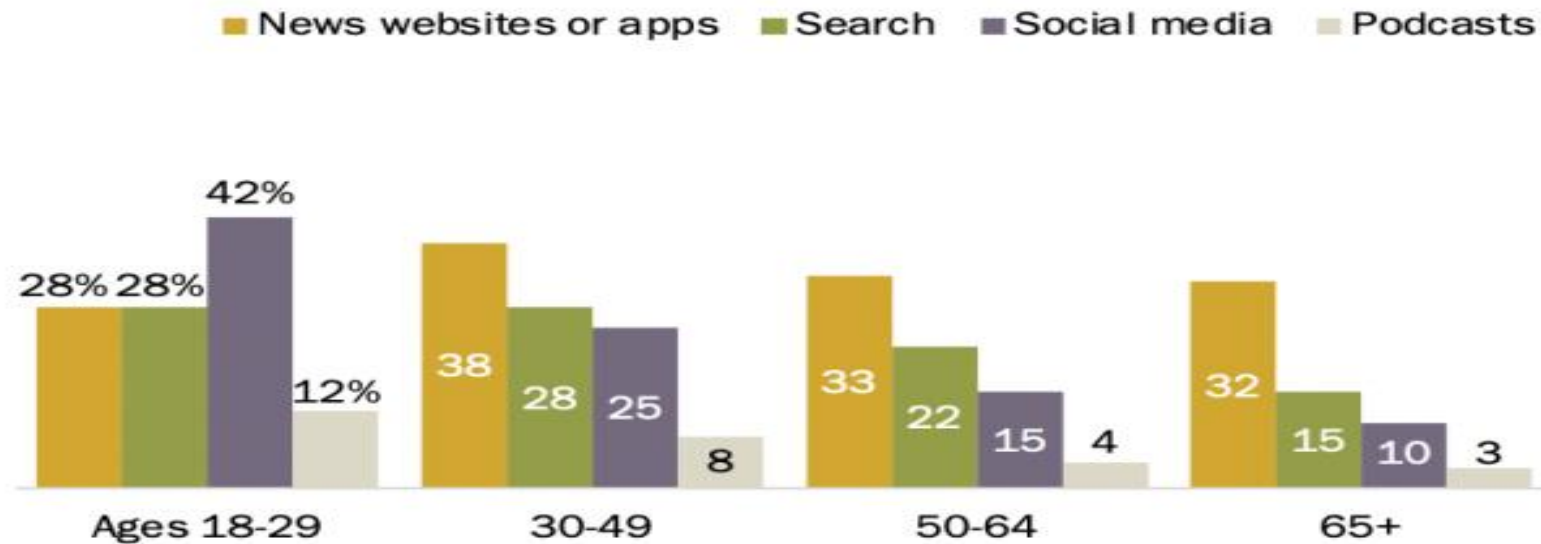
Disadvantages -Little curation of sources; “Fake News,” hate speech, inflammatory language

Information Sources

Internet Sources for news

Online, most turn to news websites except for the youngest, who are more likely to use social media

% of U.S. adults who get news often from ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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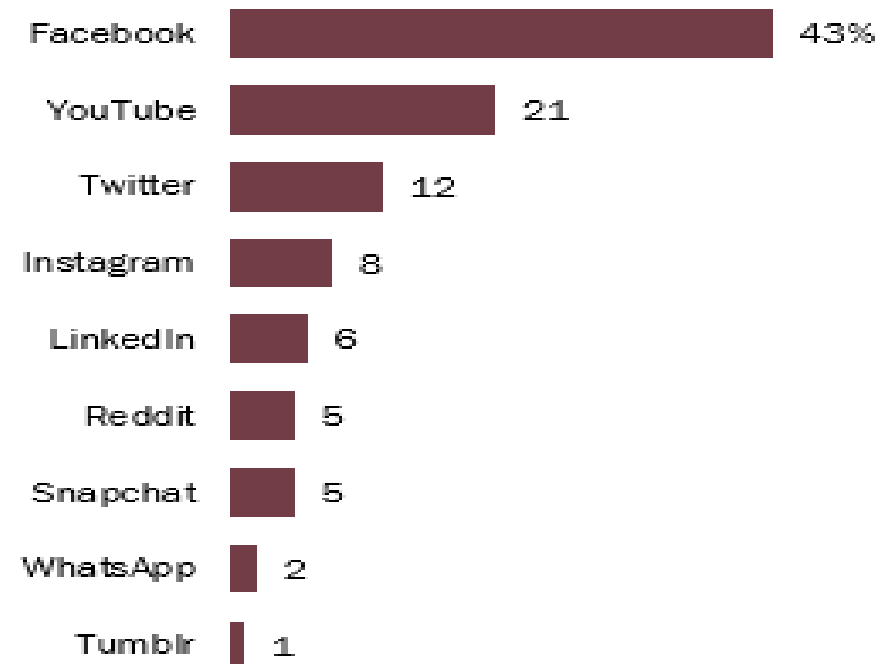
Information Sources

Social Media sites for news

- Facebook
- You Tube
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Reddit
- Snapchat
- WhatsApp

Social media sites as pathways to news

% of U.S. adults who get news on each social media site



Source: Survey conducted July 30-Aug. 12, 2018.
"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2018"

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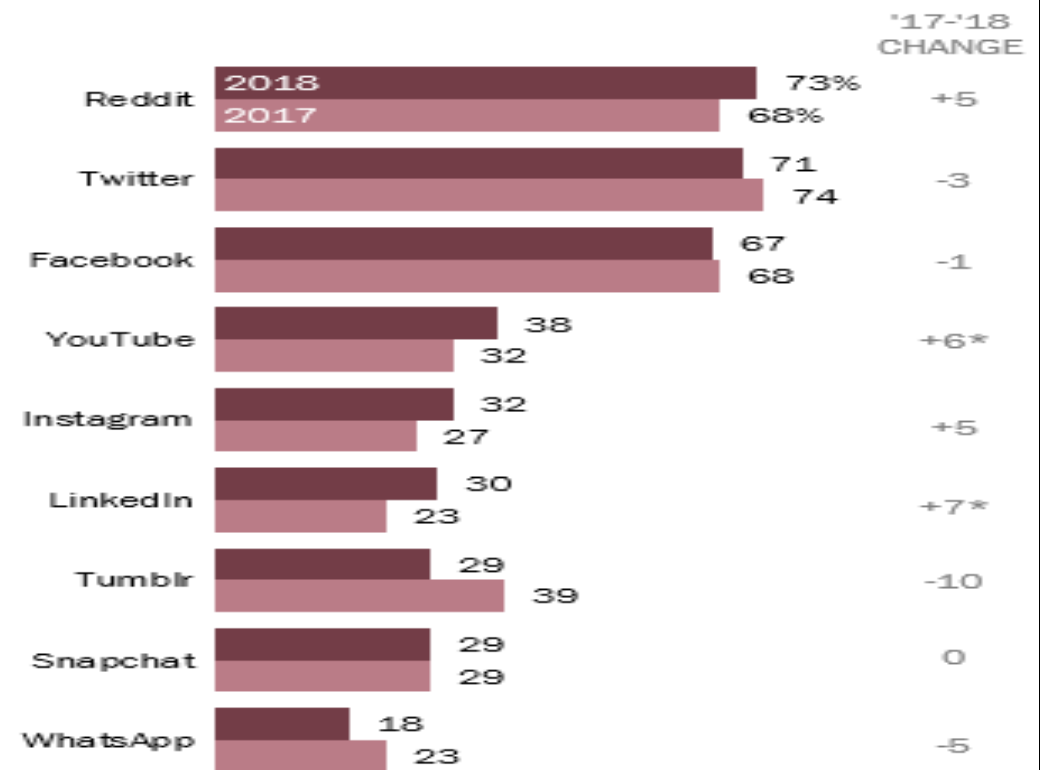
Information Sources

News-focused users

- Reddit
- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Tumblr
- Snapchat
- WhatsApp

Reddit, Twitter, Facebook stand out as sites with the most news-focused users

% of each social media site's users who get news there



*Change from 2017 to 2018 is statistically significant.

Source: Survey conducted July 30-Aug. 12, 2018.

"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2018"

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Information Sources

Internet – streaming video

Internet (“over-the-top”) video streams video to your device over the Internet

Free offerings: Newsy, NewsON, YouTube, Haystack TV, Plex, Bloomberg, Sky News, etc.

Subscription offerings: YouTube TV, Sling, Peacock, Hulu, Disney+, Direct TV Now, CBS All Access, etc.

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Coping with the Technology

“Digital literacy” includes managing the *technologies* used access the information

“Smart” devices: TVs, streaming devices, speakers, etc.

Computers - a gateway to get information

Mobile devices: smart phones, tablets

Coping with the Technology

Try not to let technology leave you behind

Can expand our information base to improve our decisions

Essential for some sources, such as Wikipedia

But don't need to keep up with all the latest fads or devices – viral news, apps, etc.



Coping with the Technology

New technologies/apps help us communicate with family and friends and navigate the world

Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, multiplayer online games

Navigation/Home automation apps/devices – Waze, Google maps, Alexa, Google Home

Devices may be more or less user-friendly. Choose what's right for you – Don't give up!

Coping with the Technology

Control the technology, not vice versa

Online contact shouldn't take the place of face-to-face contact

Managing one's attention becomes a necessary skill

High tech vs. High touch – the need for balance and for a moral compass

Coping with the Technology

Sources of assistance

Younger generation, children and grandchildren

Technology providers: Apple Store (Genius Bar)

Classes at libraries, schools, associations



Coping with the Technology

Sources of assistance (continued)

Continuing Learning Organizations: Lifetime Learning Institute (NOVA/LLI); Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI/GMU); Older Adults Technical Service (OATS/AARP)

User Groups and Forums: Personal or business; many topics like computers, tablets, smartphones, software; Meetup.com

State/Government Agencies: The State Grant for Assistive Technology Program for people with disabilities; The Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS.org)

Coping with the Technology

Content Creation

Digital technology also makes it much easier to be a content creator *(YOU!)*

BUT . . .

Think – pause and reflect. Is it:

Helpful

Inspiring

Necessary

Kind



Coping with the Technology

Content Creation

Public access (Fairfax Public Access - Ch 10) and other resources can help show us how to make our own photo galleries, commentaries, videos

YouTube – place your own videos to show your hobby or how to fix something (also Facebook, Twitter, TicTok, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.)

Coping with the Technology

Privacy and “big data”

Businesses models are eager to collect data about us and sell it to advertisers etc.

Sometimes we hand it over deliberately: e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Consider the possible uses and abuses

Keep abreast of the policy debates, legislation

Coping with the Technology

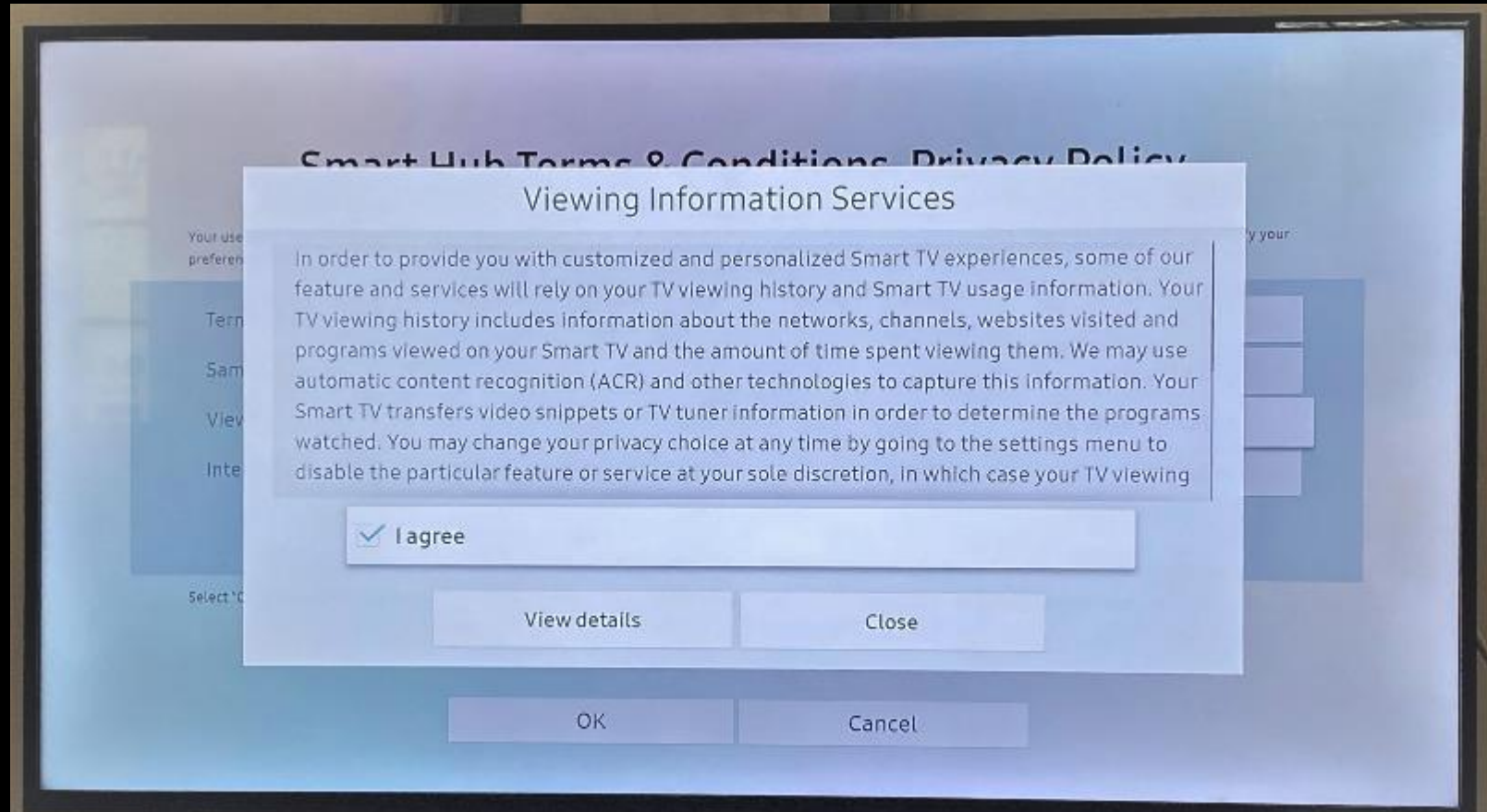
How to Protect Yourself?

Pay attention to the terms of service of social media platforms and any apps you download

Use available privacy choices on your smart or other devices to “opt-out” of allowing the device maker or service provider to sell your data

Coping with the Technology

Example: Samsung Smart TV- How to Opt-out



Viewing Information Service: Uncheck the part that says "I agree," which will stop it from monitoring what you're watching

Coping with the Technology

Use a Virtual Private Network (VPN)

- ❑ Software that can be installed onto a VPN compatible electronic device such as your smart TV, computer, cell phone, or your router (WiFi device).
- ❑ Requires contract with VPN hosting provider (e.g., NordVPN or ExpressVPN, Surfshark, IP Vanish etc).
- ❑ Creates an encrypted connection between you and Internet (encrypted to the VPN server).
- ❑ Allows you to use servers around the world as your default server and can circumvent regional blocking (where legal). E.g., VPN use in China, Russia, Iran, etc.

Coping with the Technology

Online safety



Malware (computer viruses)- use anti-virus software

Scams – don't click on a link unless you know it's trustworthy

“Phishing” (impersonators) - confirm the source of the communication

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Analyzing Information

“Digital” or “media literacy” in another sense

Knowing how to evaluate information

Thinking critically about the information with which you are confronted

“The unexamined source is not worth reading”
- So, we should examine it carefully.

Analyzing Information

1. Understand the source

2. Balance your media diet

3. Get training

Analyzing Information

1. Understand the source

Incentives and purposes of the information provider

Original versus derivative sources: the “telephone” game

Reliability of information provider

Analyzing Information

Use **SIFT** to avoid going down the rabbit hole:

(**S**)TOP – Do not read what you found. Instead:
(**I**)nvestigate the Source – Google or Wikipedia
(**F**)ind better coverage – the *original* source
(**T**)race claims, quotes, and media back to the original context – use trusted sources (Snopes.com & Factcheck.org)

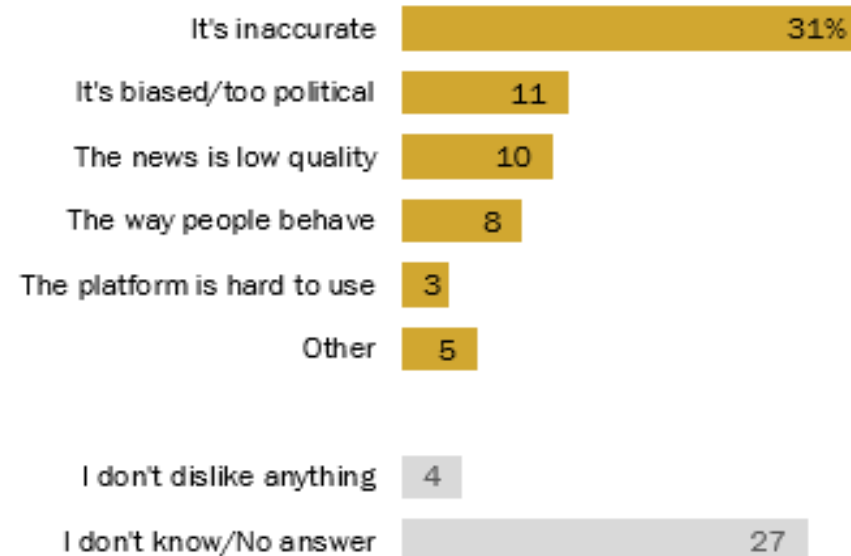
Analyzing Information

Problems with social media as a news source

- Inaccurate
- Biased/too political
- Low Quality
- People's behavior
- Hard to use
- Other

Inaccuracy tops people's concerns about social media

% of social media news consumers who say the thing they dislike most about getting news on social media is ...



Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Source: Survey conducted July 30-Aug. 12, 2018.

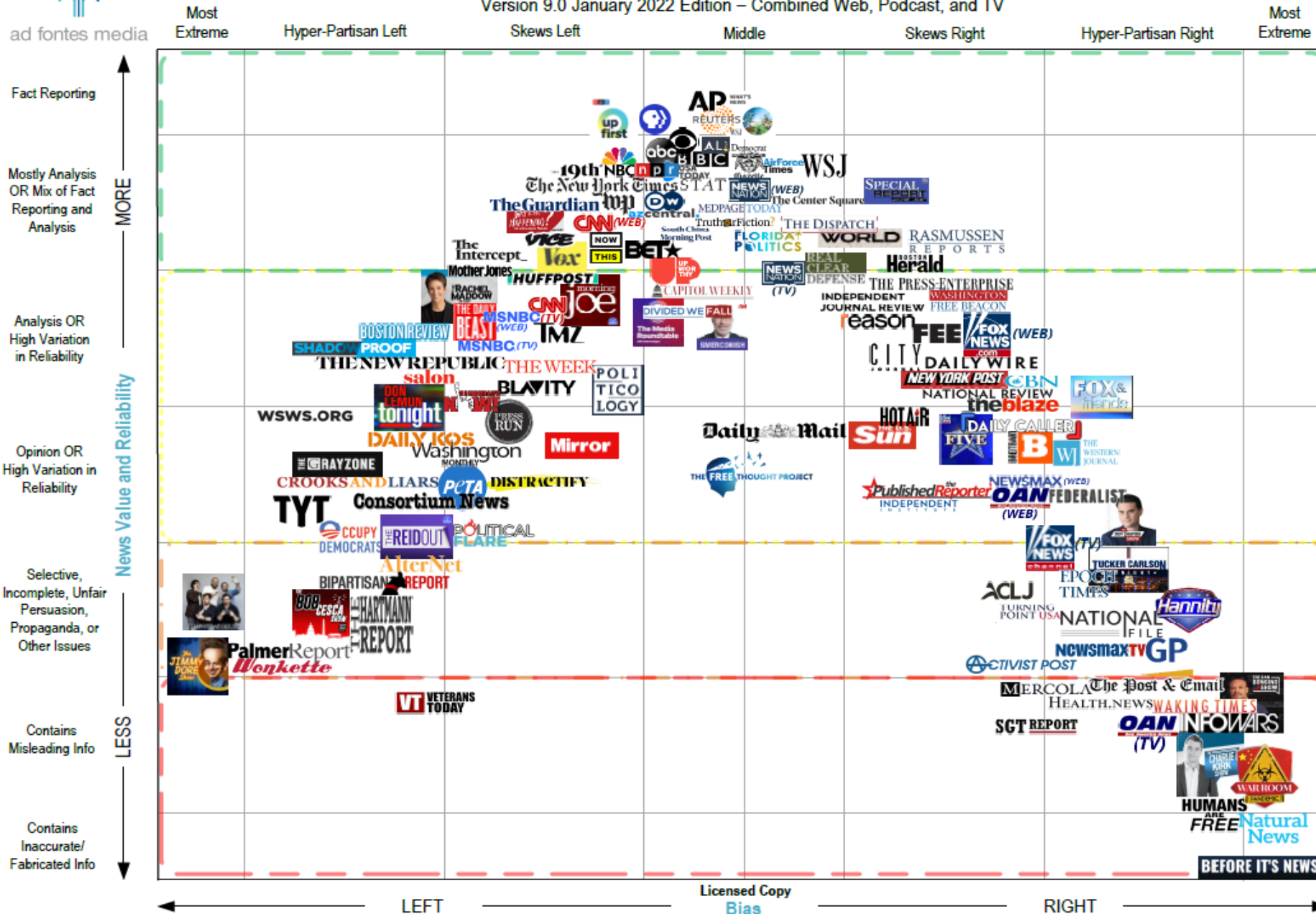
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The Media Bias Chart®

Version 9.0 January 2022 Edition – Combined Web, Podcast, and TV



Analyzing Information



2. Cultivate a balanced media diet – 6 steps:

Take stock of your current media consumption

Identify reputable news sources - vs. opinion

Consume a balanced diet - not one source

Limit “junk food” sources - sensationalism

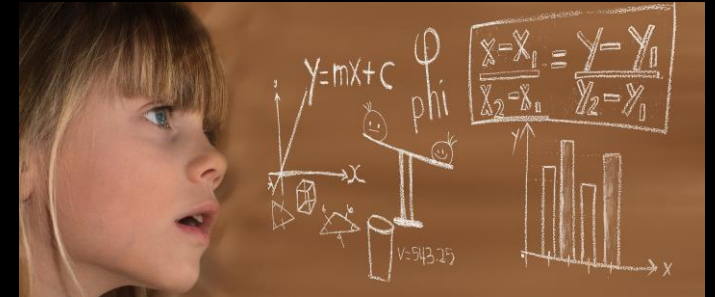
Trim the fat - spending too much time on FB

Practice mindful media consumption - focus

Analyzing Information

3. Training – on Media literacy

Classes on logic, critical thinking, media literacy, statistics, scientific method



Examples:

- ❑ Fairfax County library workshop: “Fighting Fake News with Critical Thinking and Civil Discourse”
- ❑ Comcast (internetessentials.com/learning)
- ❑ National Association of Media Literacy Educators (namele.net)
- ❑ Older Adults Technical Service (OATS) (oats.org)

Conclusion

With a vast and growing array of sources of information and news and technologies delivering it –

We must learn to use the technologies effectively, critically evaluate those sources and mindfully consider ourselves as sources



Questions?

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Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Communications Policy and Regulation Division

Assists with cable-related problems and cable safety and construction issues

- Call: 703-324-5902 or • email: CPRD@FairfaxCounty.gov or • Web: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/cable

Consumer Affairs Branch

Includes cable billing and all complaints against a business in the County

- Call for advice: 703-222-8435 • File complaints: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd/consumer-complaint-form-information