





# **Computational fact-checking**

#### Problems, state of the art, and perspectives

Julien Leblay <sup>1</sup> Ioana Manolescu <sup>2</sup> Xavier Tannier <sup>3</sup> The Web Conference - April 2018

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Artificial Intelligence Research Center – AIST, Japan

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Inria, LIX – CNRS and École Polytechnique, France

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Sorbonne Université – Inserm – LIMICS, France

#### Disclaimer

The slides presented during the WWW tutorial contained copyrighted materials.

In the present version, copyrighted materials have been replaced by blank frames.

#### Who are we?

#### Julien Leblay

Research Scientist at the AIST's AI Research Center in Tokyo, Japan.



#### Ioana Manolescu

Senior researcher at Inria Saclay and Ecole Polytechnique, France.



#### **Xavier Tannier**

Professor at Sorbonne Université and researcher at LIMICS, France



#### What is this tutorial about?

- ► **About** how computer science can help *a posteriori* fact checking of claims:
  - ► Extracting claims from some discourse,
  - Searching for the facts the claims are based on,
  - Assessing the accuracy of the claim,
  - Providing perspective to claims
- ▶ Not only about fake news detection!
- Not about image and video fact checking

Companion paper in "Journalism, Misinformation and Fact-Checking" track (Wed, Apr 25) and at https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01722666

# **Outline**

## News and journalism

#### Definition

news<sup>1</sup> noun

newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent events **journalism** *noun* 

the activity of writing for newspapers, magazines, or websites or preparing news to be broadcast

- Journalists investigate, check the facts, explain, abiding by ethical principles including accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, and accountability
- ► Many countries have laws protecting freedom of the press, which also define the rights and responsibilities of news organizations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> All definitions according to Oxford dictionary

## Freedom of the press

#### In France



- ▶ The law dates back from 1881
- ► Born on the aftermath of insurrections in Paris ("Commune"), where defamation was widespread
- Already forbids publishing fake news causing "disturbance of the public sphere"
- ► France is considering stricter regulations on news during elections

Regulating the news is one thing, but where to draw the line is another.







The New York Times





**ASIA PACIFIC** 

# India's 'Fake News' Crackdown Crumbles Over Journalists' Outrage

## Free press is an essential ingredient of a democracy

#### To debate and express dissent

Romania, circa 1989:



Banner reads: "Ceauşescu re-elected at the 14th congress!" He was in power since 1965.

Massive protests lead to approx 1000 dead.

No one convicted

# To expose and explain how a society functions

Panama Papers, 2016:



Massive tax evasion offshore. Known thanks to work by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism (ICIJ).

## Free press is an essential ingredient of a democracy

- ► To debate and express dissent.
- ► To confirm or refute public statements.
- ► To expose and explain how society functions.
- ► To keep the authorities accountable.

# Daphne Caruana Galizia (1967-2017)



## Long standing issues

#### Honest mistakes

- ► from incomplete and inaccurate sources
- ► from ambiguities of languages

**Source:** https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/13/well/eat/how-the-sugar-industry-shifted-blame-to-fat.html

# Long standing issues (continued)

#### **Bias**

On the part of journalists and reader

- ► from cultural, financial or political pressure
- ► as well as other social or psychological factors

#### Deception (including fake news)

- ► as old as journalism
- can take many forms (rumors, hoax, propaganda, satire, etc.)

## **Fact checking**

#### **Definition**

fact-check verb [with object]
investigate (an issue) in order to verify the facts

Term in use since 1930 approx.



Source: Google N-gram viewer

## Fact checking (Ye Good OI' Days)

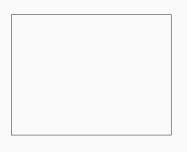
"The day I became a fact-checker at The New Yorker. I received one set of red pencils and one set of No. 2 pencils. [...] The red pencils were for underlining passages on page proofs of articles that might contain checkable facts [...] confirmed with the help of reference books from the magazine's library, including Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary, the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians and Burke's Peerage and Gentry."

#### Source:

nytimes.com/2010/08/22/magazine/22FOB-medium-t.html



#### Fact checking in the Internet era



- As the Internet took off, in the mid-90s, it gradually incorporated all other forms of media...
- ... allowing anyone publishing anything, while reaching a global audience.
- Gradually, journalists had to become more tech-savvy.

Fact checking has moved from **before** to **after** publication!

- ► A seminal article by [?] gave birth to **computational journalism** as a discipline
- ► Since then, DB, IE, NLP, ML, KR communities have started work in the area

## **Context and problems**

**Q:** "Is it true that in Moscow, Mercedes cars are being given to citizens?"

**A:** "Yes, but it is not Moscow but Leningrad, not Mercedes but Ladas, and not given to but stolen from."

Yeravan jokes, famous in the Eastern block during communism.

# Outline

## Fact-checking in the Internet era: what's new?

#### The Web as the primary media

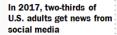
- ► Traditional news sources increasingly disseminate through the Web
- ► New outlets, e.g. so-called pure players, runs 100% of their operations on the Web
- ► Social networks became major media outlets and conduit

## Fact-checking in the Internet era: what's new?

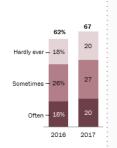
#### "Democratization" of authorship

- ► Non-media organizations (companies, government Web sites) and individuals gained access to large scale publishing facility
- ▶ No editorial process or ethics required
- ► Line blurred between news producers and consumers.
- ► Sudden abundance of data (with varying quality/credibility)

#### Social networks have become a primary source for news



% of U.S. adults who get news from social media sites ...

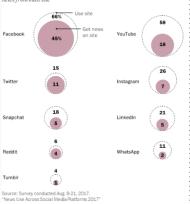


Source: Survey conducted Aug. 8-21, 2017. "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2017"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

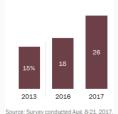
#### Social media sites as pathways to news

% of U.S. adults who use each social media site and % of U.S. adults who get news from each site



#### About one-in-four now get news from multiple social media sites

% of U.S. adults who get news on two or more different social media sites



"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2017"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In some emerging countries, Internet "is" Facebook <sup>2</sup>

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

 $^2 \text{qz.com}/243086/\text{facebook-is-creating-a-parallel-internet-in-emerging-markets}/$ 

## Social media mishaps

Social networks are increasingly weaponized to spread dubious information

#### **Example (Recent events)**

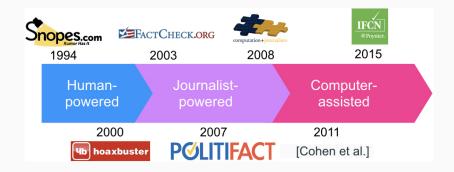
- ▶ 2-3% of Facebook accounts are fake, 5% on Twitter <sup>a</sup>
- ► Twitter conducted a sweeping "bot purge" in February 2018 b
- Russian meddling in the US presidential election
- Cambridge Analytica scandal vs. US elections and Brexit
- Insane man's terror act in Germany wrongly connected to immigrants<sup>c</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>nytimes.com/2017/11/03/technology/facebook-fake-accounts.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>b</sup>thedailybeast.com/inside-twitters-bot-purge

 $<sup>{}^{</sup>c}lemonde.fr/international/article/2018/04/09/l-allemagne-sous-le-choc-apres-l-attaque-de-munster-et-l-attentat-dejoue-a-berlin\_5282856\_3210.html$ 

## A brief history of fact checking initiatives



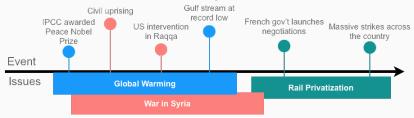
## Fact checking sites today



Source: reporterslab.org/fact-checking (Duke Reporters Lab)

## Types of information

World events are intertwined with longer-term social issues.



- ► Information is altered as it propagates across a social network (through bias, accumulated errors, and outright lies)
- ► Journalists must provide a short and high quality channel between the events on the public
- ► Stakeholders can be motivated, rely on rhetoric, persuasion
- ► Journalists must balance emotions , credibility and reasoning .

## Computer science and journalism: how can we help?

- 1. **Data journalism**: journalistic work significantly or mainly based on (digital) data
- 2. **(Semi)-automated fact checking**: fact checking work where some tasks are delegated to software
  - ► Our focus today
  - ► Fact checking tasks will be detailed shortly
- Fake news detection: software which estimates the level of falsehood of a piece of news
  - ► True, false, in-between...
  - ► May not use reference sources.

## Fact checking ingredients

To successfully check a claim, one needs to:

- 1. Lift the ambiguity
  - \* Vague statements lead to too many distinct interpretations, which one to check?
  - \* Clarify the context is which the claim is analysed (space, time...).
- 2. Ensure it is backed by sufficient references to sources.
  - Reliable reference sources give the background against which to check.
- 3. Validate the claim as consistent with the sources.
  - Some claims are crafted to mislead, i.e., look valid wrt a context or source that is irrelevant or flawed.

## The need for transparency

The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) is sponsored by the Poynter Institute to "promote excellence in fact checking".

Members commit to:



- 1. Non-partisanship and fairness.
- 2. Transparency of sources.
- 3. Transparency of function and organization.
- 4. Transparency of methodology.
- 5. Open and honest corrections.

Source: poynter.org/international-fact-checking-network-fact-checkers-code-principles

## The limits of fact checking

- Confirmation bias: people are more likely to believe what fits their prior views.
  - ► Man-made part of the echo chamber.
  - ► Automated recommendation systems trap users in filter bubbles.

#### Yet:

- ▶ Filter bubbles and echo chambers are still being studied [?, ?].
- ► Showing readers links to "related stories" reduces misperceptions more effectively [?].

## The limits of fact checking: Timing matters!

Emotionally engaging information, such as rumors and propaganda, spread faster than corrections on social networks [?].

- ► False news spread faster than true ones; most of the audience is reached in the first 24 hours [?].
- ► If verification comes too late, false information has time to "stick" with audience<sup>3</sup>.
- ▶ Backfire effect: defiance towards fact checkers may reinforce reader's perception if confronted directly [?], near instant-correction making things worse [?].







 $<sup>^3</sup> jonathan stray. com/networked-propaganda-and-counter-propaganda\\$ 

# **Outline**

#### Misinformation and disinformation



## Rumors, myths, conspiracy theories

Widespread base their ju	, often long-star udgment.	nding, <mark>misco</mark> r	nceptions, on v	vhich one mig	ght

#### Hoax

Non-elabora	ate, unsubs	tantiated o	claim. Ain	ned at <mark>spr</mark>	eading vir	ally.

## **Clickbait**

Catchy title, financial gair	Aimed mainly	at attracting	audience for

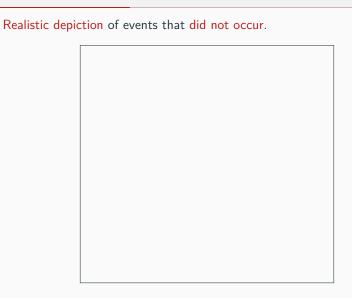
# Media hype

 r story, with some core element of truth, but vastly exaggerant in health, technology and science news.	ted.

## Wrong context assignment

ontent (image, video, audio, or quote) planted in unrel steer opinion.	ated

# **Content doctoring**



### Incorrect factual claims

Claims with obvious interpretation and for which there exists reasonably relevant and accurate data.

\*\*Our prisons are filled-up with foreigners.

BBC Question Time audience member, Oct. 20, 2016

Foreign citizens make up 9% of the general population and 12% of the prison population in England and Whales. [...] The number and proportion of foreign prisoners is falling: there were over 11,000 foreign prisoners in 2010.

**Source:** fullfact.org/immigration/foreigners-prison

,,

### Ambiguous or oversimplifying claims

but not necessari	n to multiple interpretations, some of whily the most relevant one. s in-depth analysis.	ich may be true,

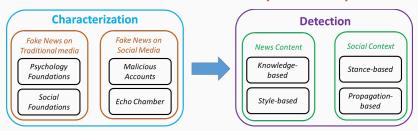
### Flavours of fake news [?]

Even when there is intention to deceive, the purpose of the deception may vary a lot:

- coordinated and well-targeted information forgery
- ▶ simple lies that catch on to a large audience
- ▶ humor, satire, sarcasm

### From characterization to detection [?]

Fake news is a news article that is intentionally and verifiably false.

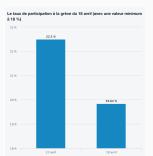


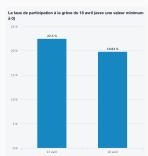
### **Outline**

### Correct but imprecise

By Les décodeurs of LeMonde.fr news papers.

- ► The French Railway Company (SNCF) is undergoing strike following reforms annoucenement.
- ► Unions, the company, the government and other interest group are in show of force.
- ► The SNCF recently published a press release aledging the mobilization was falling.





Source: lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2018/04/18/le-graphique-trompeur-de-la-

### In-depth analysis

etailed "forensic" ard to obtain, wit		which ref	erence s	ources we	re

**Source:** https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/040418/nicolas-sarkozy-bien-servi-

### **Promise verification**

Valid	Validating past claims made about the future						

### **Reversal tracking**

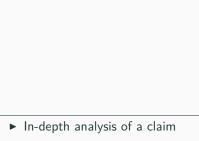
Checking a personality's position or stance on a specific issue ove	r time.

 $\textbf{Source:} \ \ politifact.com/texas/statements/2018/jan/10/beto-orourke/beto-orourke-beto-orou$ 

### State of the art

### **Outline**

### FactCheck.org



- ► First politics, now science, health etc.
- ► Particularly active during US elections

We are not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact-checkers.

### **Politifact**

- ► In-depth political claim analysis
- ► Simple classifaction for checked claims
- ► Position reversals
- ► DB published through an API

### Truth-o-meter



### Flip-o-meter



## Les Décodeurs team of "Le Monde" 47/100

## Désintox blog from "Libération" 48/100

# Crosscheck from First Draft News

- ► Supported by Google News Initiave
- ► Relies on volunteers
- ► Trains the public to critical thinking and news analysis

### **Outline**

### Fact checking pipeline

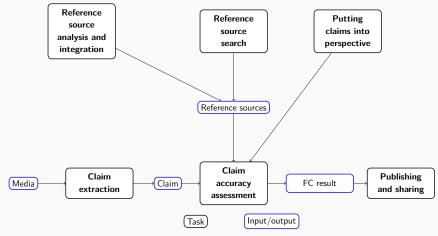
### Definition (Fact checking [?])

Defined as a four-stage process where

- (i) media sources are monitored,
- (ii) claims are spotted,
- (iii) claims are checked,
- (iv) fact checking analysis results are created and published.

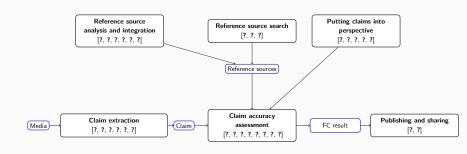
### Fact checking from a content management perspective





## Fact checking from a content management perspective: partial reference list

Full list of references available in companion paper [?] (presented **Wednesday!**)



Task Input/output

### Which reference data source to use?

- ► Fixed (known in advance):
  - ► ClaimBuster [?]
  - ► DisputeFinder (PolitiFact API) [?]
  - ► FullFact (internal DB of manually checked claims) [?]
  - TruthTeller (claims manually checked by Factcheck.org);
  - The Décodex plug-in developed by Le Monde also leverages their past fact checking analyses

### ▶ Web search:

- ► DeFacto [?, ?]
- ► ClaimBuster [?]

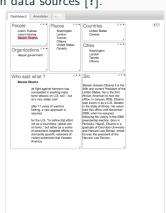
Professional journalism is very picky on source quality.



### Which reference data source to use? (continued)

- ► General Knowledge Bases such as Wikipedia [?]
- Heterogeneous Open Data FactMinder manual analysis of online articles against any open data sources [?].





### Building reference data sources: truth discovery

Partially overlapping Web sources require arbitrating between their information.

### **Example**

NY restaurant information [?]

Source	Coverage	Exactness	Freshness	#Closed-rest
MenuPages	.66	.98	.86	29
TasteSpace	.44	.97	.3	106
NYMagazine	.43	.98	.54	59
NYTimes	.43	.98	.38	72
ActiveDiner	.41	.95	.86	70
TimeOut	.38	.99	.68	33
SavoryCities	.27	.99	.41	33
VillageVoice	.22	.94	.4	37
FoodBuzz	.18	.92	.3	59
NewYork	.13	.92	.45	28
OpenTable	.12	.92	.45	9
DiningGuide	.1	.9	.09	48
GoogleMaps	-	-	-	212

Extracted from 12 sources + manually checked Probabilistic approach for determining the true value, based on coverage, exactness and freshness, and on who copied whom.

### Building reference data sources: truth discovery

Truth discovery survey [?]:

**Input**: a set of values for an object, each from a different source **Output**: most likely value and trustworthiness of each source

### Principle:

- ► A source whose value for an object was deemed correct, will be considered more trustworthy
- ... and values coming from a trustworthy source will be considered more likely to be correct

**Methods**: iterative; optimization-based (error minimization); probabilistic graphical models

### Constructing reference data sources: data integration

Valuable information is sometimes found across several data sources

### Data integration approaches:

▶ Warehouse: extract and consolidate all data sources into one



Text (contracts) and relational (screen company coordinates) data sources fused into one (Neo4J) graph database Easy to use; needs to be redone for every new dataset

► **Mediator**: structured data sources remain unchanged and are queried together under a unified schema

### Constructing reference data sources: data integration (cont'd)

Valuable information is sometimes found across several data sources

### Data integration approaches (cont'd):

- ► Data space: structured and unstructured data sources queried through keywords [?]
- ➤ Data lake: large number of structured and unstructured data sources w/o unified schema; subsets of these are exploited together in mediator style, e.g. [?]<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Dataflow: data journalism analytical pipelines<sup>5</sup>

https://blogs.oracle.com/bigdata/the-new-data-lake-you-need-more-than-hdfs

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>https://www.ibm.com/analytics/data-management/data-lake,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>http://jonathanstray.com/introducing-the-cj-workbench

### Improving usability of reference data sources

High-quality reference data, e.g., published by statistic institutes, may be hard to query

- Extract data into RDF Linked Open Data (preserving table and header structure) [?]
- Search for exact or closest approximate answer to a keyword query [?]



**Source:** insee.fr/fr/statistiques/ 3292347?sommaire=3292415

### Searching for truth in statistic tables

Query: "youth unemployment France August 2017"

					loyment	
		Number of persons (in thousands)				
	Oct-2016	Jul-2017	Aug-2017	Sep-2017	Oct-2017	
Belgium	:	77	77	77	:	
Bulgaria	27	22	21	19	19	
Czech Republic	34	27	25	23	23	
Denmark	62	54	53	49	47	
Germany	293	283	283	283	283	
France	663	629	625	623	625	

**Answer:** 625 + link to the spreadsheet as result proof (provenance, justification)

- Extraction needs to cope with nested headers
- ► Off-line source indexing
- Search for (i) relevant datasets and (ii) most relevant cells in each dataset

### Claim recognition: claim extraction

- ► Topic-driven extraction from media articles [?].
  - ► Task: Given a topic (context), find related claims, e.g.:

Topic Selling violent video games to minors should be banned

Related claim Violent video games can increase children's aggression

- Approach: fully supervised learning.
- ▶ Disputed claims covered by the reference database:

### DisputeFinder [?].

- Task: Given a text, extract claims disputed by a trusted source, e.g.:
  Many vaccines contain mercury, aluminium and other toxins that should have parents asking questions before immunizing their children.
- ► Approach: keyword retrieval against a claim database.

### Claim recognition: claim extraction (continued)

- Entity disambiguation applied on claims, using a reference knowledge base: DeFacto [?].
  - Task: Given a text, extract 10 types of predefined relations between named entities.<sup>6</sup>
  - ► Example:

Input: Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics.
Output:

dbr:Albert\_Einstein dbo:award dbr:Nobel\_Prize



- ► Approach: rule-based
- ▶ Research into extraction from text feeds, audio, video: FullFact [?] (technical details not available at this time).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Relations are: award, birth, death, foundationPlace, leader, NBAteam, publicationDate, spouse, starringActor, subsidiary

### Claim recognition: classifying check-worthiness

- 1. Verifiability: Verifiable vs. Unverifiable [?, ?, ?]
- 2. Factuality and worthiness:

```
Non-factual (e.g., opinions or subjective content) vs.
Factual but not interesting (consensual, general) vs.
Factual and interesting (that is, check-worthy). [?, ?]
```

- 3. Opinion: Facts vs. opinions [?]
- 4. Dialogic and argumentative markers:
  - ► Degrees of agreement with a previous post
  - Cordiality, audience-direction, combativeness, assertiveness, emotionality of argumentation, sarcasm

[?]

All these approaches based on fully-supervised systems with expert- or crowd-sourced data.

### Stance detection

Is a text in favor of a given target, against it, neutral or unrelated?

- ► Target: legalization of abortion
- ▶ Negative stance: "A foetus has rights too! Make your voice heard".
- ► Target: Donald Trump
- ► Positive stance: "@realDonaldTrump is the only honest voice of the @GOP".

Sources can be general claims, debates in online forums, student essays, but mostly news or political speeches, debates, tweets.

Approaches are all based on supervised learning.

[?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?], FakeNewsChallenge (2017).

### Claim accuracy assessment

- ▶ DeFacto finds evidence potentially proving the claim as Web page text snippets, sufficiently close to the claim [?, ?].
- ClaimBuster
  - 1) Matches claims against previously checked claims from trusted repositories (PolitiFact, etc.)
  - 2) If no similar claim is found, reverts to Web search engines and question answering systems such as Wolfram Alpha.

[?, ?]

In [?], checking an RDF triple claim is finding a short path from the subject to the object, in the transitive closure of a knowledge graph. The degree of the node influences the truth value of a candidate supporting path.



### Claim accuracy assessment (continued)

- ► The Fast and Furious FactCheck Challenge<sup>7</sup> proposed to classify news articles (not claims) among: TRUE, FALSE, SOMEWHAT TRUE and SOMEWHAT FALSE w/ human and/or automated tools;
- ► Les Décodeurs<sup>8</sup> (Le Monde) developed:
  - A database of manually checked claims w/ analysis and rumor propagators.
  - ► A web navigator plugin w/ a trust score from the aggregated outputs of previous fact checks, where available.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>https://herox.com/factcheck/

<sup>8</sup>http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/

### Claim accuracy assessment: related tasks

These well-known NLP tasks have never really been applied to fact-checking problems as such:

- ► Textual entailment compares two texts and decides whether one implies the other [?].
- ► The SemEval's Semantic Textual Similarity task offers a graded and typed definition of semantic similarity [?].
- ▶ Rumor detection classifies a set of posts/tweets as rumor or not rumor, or studies the birth and propagation of rumors [?, ?].

### Fake news detection

- ► Flourishing field
- ▶ Growing number of challenges, hackathons and data sets available
  - Around 160 news-related datasets and 70 public kernels on Kaggle
  - ► BuzzFeedNews<sup>9</sup>: Sample of news published on Facebook prior to the 2016 U.S. elections
  - ► LIAR<sup>10</sup>: A Politifact archive
  - ▶ BS Detector<sup>11</sup>: data collected through the BS detector browser extension.
  - ► CREDBANK<sup>12</sup>: A Large-scale Social Media Corpus With Associated Credibility Annotations

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>https://github.com/BuzzFeedNews/2016-10-facebook-fact-

check/tree/master/data

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>https://www.cs.ucsb.edu/ william/data/liar dataset.zip

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>https://github.com/bs-detector/bs-detector

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>https://github.com/compsocial/CREDBANK-data

#### **CLEF 2018 Fact Checking Lab**



- "Automatic Identification and Verification of Claims in Political Debates"
- ► Task 1: Check-worthiness. Predict which claim in a political debate should be prioritized for fact-checking.
- ► Task 2: Factuality. Checking the factuality of the identified worth-checking claims.
- ▶ http://alt.qcri.org/clef2018-factcheck/index.php?id=overview

# Putting claims into perspective



# The query perturbation approach [?, ?]

Giuliani's claim: "Adoptions went up 65 to 70 percent when [he] was mayor [of New York City]."

SELECT after.total / before.total

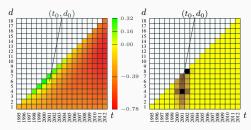
FROM (SELECT SUM(number) AS total FROM adopt

WHERE year BETWEEN t-w-d+1 AND t-d) AS before,

(SELECT SUM(number) AS total FROM adopt

WHERE year BETWEEN AND t-w+1 AND t) AS after;

#### Query Response Surface (QRS)



## The query perturbation approach (continued)

#### Relative strength and relative sensitivity are used to

- ► Find counter-argument (that weakens the original claim), and reverse-engineer vague claims
- ► Robustness: All perturbations result in stronger or equally strong claims
- Other notions such as fairness, and uniquess

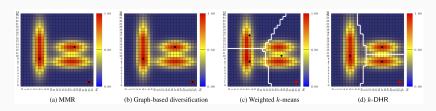
Also introduce ways to check window aggregate comparison claims, and time series similarities claims.

# Diversity and representativity [?]

Follow-up work: when many counter arguments exist, select a subset maximizing utility, diversity and representativeness.

**Problem:** Find a <u>Diverse Set of k <u>High-Value Representatives</u> from numerical data, for counter-argument generation and computational lead finding [?].</u>

Three interesting areas (plus one noisy spike) are hidden in the data. The first three methods fail to find them and/or to ignore the spike.



Optimization method to automatically select k-DHR [?].

## Putting claims into perspective (continued)

Context-dependent reasoning can be used to a veracity score to all possible contexts of a claim [?]

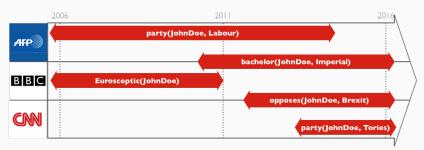
#### **Example**

"John Doe is a Eurosceptic."

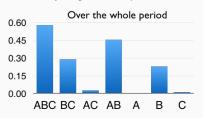
- ▶ Depends on what we mean by "Eurosceptic"
- ► Not everybody agrees!

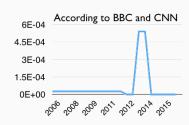
Key idea: annotate the data and axioms with contextual details.

## Putting claims into perspective (continued)



#### Eurosceptic(JohnDoe)?





## Putting claims into perspective (continued)

- ▶ Data mining techniques used to highlight claims about behavior in voting or rating contexts: Identify groups of individuals and situations where their agreement significantly differs from usual [?].
- ► Attempts to build a general and balanced picture of a complex issue [?].



## Sharing and publishing fact checking results

- ▶ DeFacto shares outputs as RDF graphs with provenance information [?];
- ► ClaimBuster provides access to their fact checking outputs [?, ?];
- ► FactCheck.org and PolitFact provide API access, and their output is already used by several other tools

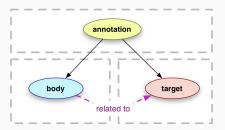
#### **Structured Journalism**

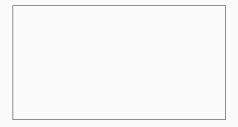
>	Structured Journalism <sup>13</sup> encourages journalists to publish database items to simplify aggregating, mashing and referencing stories		

**Source:** https://project.wnyc.org/traffic-deaths-2015/

#### **Web Annotations**

► W3C's Web Annotation Working Group published recommendation's data model, vocabulary and protocol





**Source:** w3.org/TR/annotation-model/

**Source:** web.hypothes.is/journalism/

#### Schema.org

- ► ClaimReview<sup>14</sup> was introduced to Schema.org in 2017.
- ▶ Used by search engines to quickly find analysis on past claims.
- Share the facts by Jigsaw, an Alphabet innovation incubator, and Duke Reporters' Lab facilitates sharing fact checking articles.



**Source:** www.sharethefacts.org/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>http://schema.org/ClaimReview

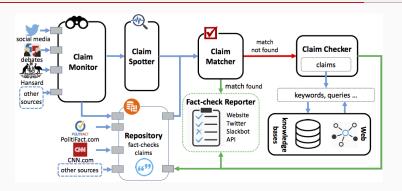
# **Publishing ClaimReview using MicroFormat**

```
<div itemscope="" itemtype="http://schema.org/ClaimReview">
 An example paragraph reviewing a claim expressed in another document.
 <11>
   <dt>Date published:</dt>
   <dd itemprop="datePublished">2014-07-23</dd>
   <dt>Review url:</dt>
   <dd itemprop="url">http://www.politifact.com/texas/statements/2014/jul/23/rick-perry,
   <dt>Review by:</dt>
   <44>
    <span itemprop="author" itemscope="" itemtype="http://schema.org/Organization">
        <span itemprop="name"><a itemprop="url" href="http://www.politifact.com/">Politi
        <img itemprop="image" src="http://static.politifact.com/mediapage/jpgs/politifact</pre>
        <link itemprop="sameAs" href="http://twitter.com/politifact"/>
    </span>
   </dd>
 </dl>
 <h3>Claim reviewed:</h3>
   <blockguote itemprop="claimReviewed">
   More than 3,000 homicides were committed by 'illegal aliens' over the past six years
   </blockauote>
   <span itemprop="reviewRating" itemscope="" itemtype="http://schema.org/Rating">
     Rating: <span itemprop="ratingValue">1</span>
     (best score: <span itemprop="bestRating">6</span>),
     "<span itemprop="alternateName">True</span>".
                                                                                 82/100
```

<img itemprop="image" src="http://static.politifact.com.s3.amazonaws.com/rulings/to</pre>

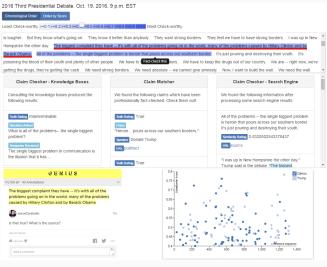
# ClaimReview as used in Google News

# End-to-end systems: ClaimBuster [?]

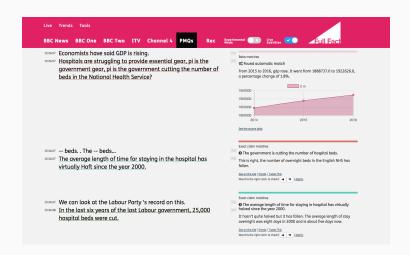


- Assigns a score to each sentence based on how factual it is (low = subjective or opinionated phrase.)
- Above a certain threshold, a claim is matched against a set of fact-checking websites
- ► Complementary evidence collected from general knowledge bases, otherwise search engines

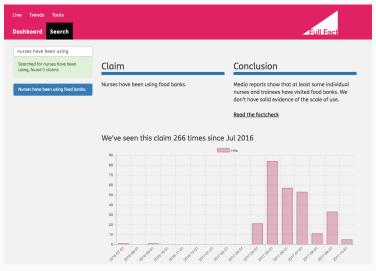
#### End-to-end system: ClaimBuster (continued)



## End-to-end system: FullFact.org [?]



#### **End-to-end system: FullFact.org (continued)**

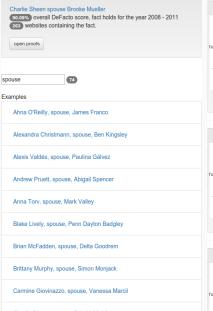


# End-to-end system: DeFacto [?]

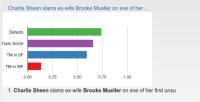


- ► The system takes as input an RDF Triple, or a sentence that can be translated into one.
- ► Returns a set of pages, or excerpts thereof, w/ source trustworthiness (relying on PageRank, and page authority on a given topic)
- ► Confidence score computed based on the number of proofs found and source trustworthiness.
- ► Try to match the triple against the Linked Open Dataset
- ► The search for matches is done by verbalizing the input RDF triples and relying on search engines.

## **End-to-end systems: DeFacto (continued)**

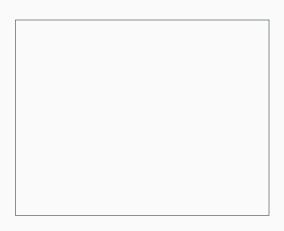








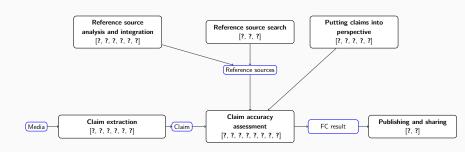
# Online fact checking: Truthteller (2013)



**Source:** truthteller.washingtonpost.com (now discontinued)

- Now defunct
- ➤ Task: Given a video of a discourse/debate, identify claims and link them to a trusted source of fact-checked claims (FactCheck.org).
- ► Approach: Speech recognition and basic similarity metrics between texts (from videos and from the trusted database).

#### **Overview**



Task Input/output

# **Perspectives**

## **Outline**

#### **Better foundations**

Agreed-upon notions on event, issue, **claim**, **context** and stance would help

- ► validate new approaches,
- evaluate their coverage and efficiency,
- ► compare their capabilities.

## **Quality control**

misinformation /

► Facebook discontinued the "Disputed Stories" experiment, following complaint over quality and potential bias<sup>15</sup>

► Finer-grained check-worthiness recognition.

Current systems rate on a scale from factual to opinionated. It

 $\frac{\text{cannot be checked without context } \cite{Context}.}{^{15}\text{newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/12/news-feed-fyi-updates-in-our-fight-against-seed-fyi-updates$ 

would be useful to rate <u>how context-dependent</u> a factual claim is. E.g., "This city's taxes have gone up 20% since the last elections"

#### Transparency, interpretability, accountability

► Transparency is technically easy, but usually not enough

#### Example (Fake news detection)

Publishing the machine learning model for a fake news detection system goes in the right direction, but such models are hardly interpretable.

► Interpretability is harder to achieve and typically requires foundations [?, ?].

#### **Example (Expert systems)**

Expert systems use to have an "explain facility". We probably need it back!

Accountability concerns ownership of statements, i.e., who-said-what vs. who-reported-way. The vast literature on provenance likely has a role to play.

#### Collaboration

- ► From exchanging trusted data or previous fact checks, to coordinated work to face difficult investigations
- ▶ When fact checkers are of different sensibilities, fact checking becomes less partisan and credibility improves.
- ► Collaboration empowered by content management tools is a strong trend in journalism, promoted by organizations such as the ICIJ<sup>16</sup>
- ► CrossCheck<sup>17</sup> is a premier example of this trend.

 $<sup>^{16}</sup>$ International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, behind the Panama Papers and other such high-profile international investigations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>https://crosscheck.firstdraftnews.com/

# **Collaboration (continued)**

<b>CJ Workbench:</b> an online data curation and sharing platform for journalists.		

Source: cjworkbench.org

#### **Standardization**

- Beyond "ClaimReview" more standards are needed to cover fact checking protocols, tools and functions.
- ► A common and open framework for naming issues and events, and describing their interaction
- ► A common framework for managing time in Web data

## **Pluridisciplinarity**

- Social and cognitive sciences useful to help devise psychologically effective fact-checking tools
- A recent whitepaper makes recommendations toward making fact checking more convincing, making it reach a larger audience, and avoiding viral misinformation<sup>18</sup>
- ► Interactions between computer scientists and journalists have been extremely fruitful for both sides [?]

#### **Example (Computational lead finding)**

An analysis of the way Wisconsin voting districts are drawn  $^{19}$ , highlighting the (very) low probability that they may result from an "honest" design.

In the article's words, "it's math versus math, with democracy at stake".

 $<sup>^{18}</sup> american press institute.org/publications/reports/white-papers/future-of-fact-checking/$ 

 $<sup>^{19}</sup> nytimes.com/2017/10/06/opinion/sunday/computers-gerrymandering-wisconsin.html$ 

#### Focus on issues over claims

- ► Most newsworthy questions are usually broader than just a claim.

  E.g., a misleading statement about <u>criminal activity of refugees in</u>

  the countries receiving them participates to a larger discussion about <u>immigration</u>, and the way different political parties argue it should be handled...
- ► One of the main points discussed in recent report by the American Press Institute??.

#### **Education**

- ▶ Data literacy, envisioned as a set of math and statistic skills, through dedicated education modules at all levels.
- Some news outlets, e.g. France24's The Observer, have dedicated content on critical thinking and news verification.
- ► The Google News Initiative and CrossCheck FR now organize fact checking classes.
- Computer literacy is gaining ground in school curricula<sup>20</sup>
   Understanding the way media and communication works gives further tools to discern manipulation, statistic or otherwise.

 $<sup>^{20}</sup> See$  e.g. the course "Calling Bullshit: Data Reasoning in a Digital World" created at U. Washington, http://callingbullshit.org/syllabus.html

#### Adapting the delivery

- ► Timely, sharp and balanced results.
- ► Avoiding frontal attack on one's convictions and beliefs.
- Choice of the best media for fact checking to reach each audience group.
- ► Engage and entertain the audience
  - Fact checking success is (also) judged by the audience it can gather and retain.

## **Outline**

## Data modeling and storage

Journalism is one of the last industries to adopt digital tools. Many industries have successfully carried this transition, however for journalists, it is complicated by:

- ► Historical focus on **text** (not structured records)
- Strong focus on creativity and speed over procedure, discipline, long-run
- Lack of a single application domain (across the newroom); doable for specialized journalists or teams
- ► Limited financial means, with some notable exceptions (Ouest France)
- ► In many newrooms, there is no long-term persistent content management plan beyond archiving own articles
- ► A start: **reference databases**, e.g., of sports teams, precincts, public figures, companies...

### Data modeling and storage

What kinds of data journalists need to use?

- ▶ Whatever they can get their hands on
- ▶ Popular formats: PDF, JSON, CSV, XLS etc.
- Need automatic data types detection

All these data types need back-up mechanisms, e.g. (cloud-storage), CMS functionalities...

### Data matching, linking and integration

Data comes in heterogeneous data models, schemas

Data sources partially overlap (or have similar topics) but have been produced in isolation.

This is the perfect setting in need of:

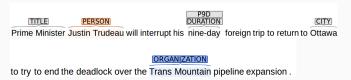
- 1. Entity recognition: identifying in text, mentions of a known structured entity
  - Link incoming text article to the entities it features, as they are described in the reference database
- 2. Entity linking: recognizing when two structured objects are the same
  - ► Well-known problem in the Web context



Particular twist: strong bonus for trusted data

### **Natural Language Processing**

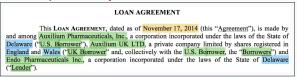
- ► Basic NLP functionalities are used in some newsrooms but hardly exploited in workflows
  - ► Named entity recognition (person, location, organization names)
  - Smart search
  - Voice recognition



Source: Stanford CoreNLP output

### Natural Language Processing (continued)

- ▶ Advanced approaches are not ready for production use by non-specialists, and require important human annotation effort:
  - Domain-specific entity extraction



Source: [?]

Relation extraction Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will interrupt his



Knowledge discovery

### **Natural Language Processing (continued)**

- ▶ Bottlenecks currently tackled by NLP researchers:
  - Data quality: how to perform a good extraction from noisy or sparse data
  - Data heterogeneity: how to deal with knowledge distributed over structured, semi-structured and unstructured datasets.
  - ► Supervision: current effective approaches requires an important amount of human-annotated data. Reducing the need for human supervision is critical (distant supervision, active learning, domain adaptatation, transfer learning, etc.)
  - ► Reasoning and inference is still limited.
  - ► Interpretability is a key challenge.
  - ► Industrial grade systems are still not the rule.
- ► Efficient NLP systems for fact checking will have to be crosslingual!

# Time management

### Almost everything is time-dependent

- ► Facts, beliefs and data evolves in time and have a limited period of validity.
- Events have start and end points.
- ► Fact check results become outdated, also!

### The time dimension can be the news!

The time when someone does, say or learns something can make the difference between

- ► A willful lie or ignorance
- Lawful or criminal behavior, e.g., insider trading, lying to investigators

### Example (Comey vs. Trump)

"you have to understand the chronology. The underlying question is whether Trump's firing of Comey constituted obstruction of justice, which has a great deal to do with Flynn"<sup>21</sup>

Follows a chronology on 11 dates and the conclusion:

"If we accept Comey's account [...], then Trump asked Comey to drop the investigation of Flynn after members of his staff knew he had lied to the VP about it, and might even have had reason to believe he had lied to the FBI as well".

 $<sup>^{21}</sup> https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2018/04/20/heres-another-telling-revelation-in-the-comey-memos$ 

### Time management (continued)

**Tracing data and its evolution** for accuracy, transparency, reproducibility.

A FCMS should record and permanently store time information such as

- ► Data creation time stamp
- ► Acquisition times
- ► Statement date
- Version management
- ▶ In text, temporal expressions and their relations with events

Yet, despite a W3C recommendation (OWL-Time), there is no widely used standard for representing time in Web data.

### Data quality management

Applying data life cycle management tools to reference sources and fact checks.



# **Enlisting experts**

▶ Prodiving tools for experts to validate complex claims	
	114/

# **Enlisting experts (continued)**

 $\textbf{Source:} \ \mathsf{climatefeedback.org} /$ 

# Support for reproducibility

Enabling to "replay" fact checking effort and get the same results.

- ► Fact checking can be seen as a scientific or forensic work
  - → Reproducibility is needed
- ► This means:
  - Defining and structuring the fact-checking process, inputs and outputs
  - ► Keeping trace of manual fact-checking processes
  - Building multilingual benchmarks more complex than binary fake-news benchmarks
- ► Sharing reproducible results can help:
  - ► Strengthening a scientific community and accelerating the research.
  - ► Preserving (or regaining) citizens' trust.
  - Important for fact-checking in general, not only for automated solutions.

# Thank you for your attention. Questions?

### References i







# **Computational fact-checking**

### Problems, state of the art, and perspectives

Julien Leblay <sup>1</sup> Ioana Manolescu <sup>2</sup> Xavier Tannier <sup>3</sup> The Web Conference - April 2018

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Artificial Intelligence Research Center – AIST, Japan

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Inria, LIX – CNRS and École Polytechnique, France

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Sorbonne Université – Inserm – LIMICS, France