



‘Fake news’ event was an important discussion

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Kudos to Victoria Golden-Thompson, who coordinated the “Fake News” panel discussion at the Bob Kirby Branch of the Warren County Public Library on Thursday; a special thanks as well to Joe Imel and Gordon "Mac" McKerral, who also served on the panel – and to Alan Palmer, who moderated the discussion.

Most importantly, I want to express my appreciation for all those from our local community who took time to attend the event and to the Daily News for covering it. I believe strongly that this type of open exchange of ideas and perspectives is absolutely essential to the health of our democracy.

As noted, I believe there are several reasons we are seeing the rise of so-called “fake news.” Ultimate responsibility for the phenomenon lies with both our public officials and the media outlets. When politicians are criticized, they often attempt to put a more favorable “spin” on the facts – or create an entirely new narrative that better serves their needs.

And in order to garner ratings, appeal to consumers and enhance advertising revenues, there is a constant effort by journalists and pundits to make everything seem like “breaking news.” Merely reporting what happened does not precipitate nearly as much “buzz” as interpreting the story – usually within the context of a particular ideology.

Moreover, in times past, there seemed to be more of a clear distinction between “news” and “commentary.” Over the last few decades, the line has gotten a lot fuzzier. Subtle manipulations can be difficult to isolate, especially when critical thinking skills seem to be in decline.

Part of what we are dealing with is definitional. It is still relatively easy to spot “fake news” consisting of an outright fabrication. It might take a little time, but the truth can usually be uncovered with resourcefulness and persistence.

Aaron W. Hughey
Bowling Green

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