

# Can Citizen Science Help Fight Misinformation and Biased News Coverage? | Discover Magazine

By Julia Travers

October 13, 2020

In an era of social media bots, deepfakes and “alternative facts,” reliable news is more important than ever. Now, a citizen science project called Public Editor is asking volunteers to help suss out credible news through online analysis. With guidance and support, Public Editor volunteers evaluate sections of news articles for “reasoning errors” and other issues.

The project takes its name from the public editor role at news publications, which is usually responsible for supervising an outlet’s journalistic ethics and, at times, acting as a liaison to the public. Public Editor has adopted aspects of this traditional post and digitized them with the help of citizen science and artificial intelligence.

“The most rewarding aspect of this work is hearing from volunteers who so appreciate being empowered to confront this massive and growing problem of misinformation,” says Public Editor’s co-director, Nick Adams. “The harmful effects seem to be compounding as bogus thinking accelerates both the spread of COVID and the erosion of our common bonds as a national community.”

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