

Misunderstanding Misinformation | Issues in Science and Technology

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An obsession with gauging accuracy of individual posts is misguided. To strengthen information ecosystems, focus on narratives and why people share what they do.

In the fall of 2017, [Collins Dictionary named fake news word of the year](#). It was hard to argue with the decision. Journalists were using the phrase to raise awareness of false and misleading information online. Academics had started [publishing copiously on the subject](#) and even named conferences after it. And of course, US president [Donald Trump regularly used the epithet from the podium](#) to discredit nearly anything he disliked.

By spring of that year, I had already become exasperated by how this term was being used to attack the news media. Worse, it had never captured the problem: most content wasn't actually fake, but genuine content used out of context—and only rarely did it look like news. I made a rallying cry to [stop using fake news](#) and instead use *misinformation*, *disinformation*, and *malinformation* under [the umbrella term information disorder](#). These terms, especially the first two, have caught on, but they represent an overly simple, tidy framework I no longer find useful.

[...]

Source: [Misunderstanding Misinformation](#)