

Library Column
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“Fake News 101”: The Conversation Continues This Monday

by Diana Laughlin, Program Services Supervisor

Often attributed to Mark Twain, it was Charles Dudley Warner who said, “Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody ever does anything about it.” Maybe something similar can be said about “fake news”.

With the weather, we can’t always agree if we “need the sunshine” or we “need the moisture”. Similarly with the news, we can’t all agree on what we like and dislike about today’s media, but we’d all like to feel more confident in discerning what is credible and what is questionable. This season, the Estes Valley Library has programs to help us develop the skills to build that confidence.

Following up on feedback we received on this topic in recent months—and with support from a national grant—we’re happy to announce the first in a three-part series of nonpartisan civic programs on today’s timely themes of news literacy.

We encourage you to join us this Monday, February 5 from 6:30 to 8 pm as we welcome special guest Dr. Elizabeth Skewes for a presentation titled “Fake News 101: To Believe or Not to Believe”.

Much like shopping requires us to be wise consumers—looking beyond shiny packaging for quality—news is similar. Some sources are credible; others are not; others are difficult to distinguish, falling somewhere on a spectrum between highly reliable and outright deceptive. Those attending Monday’s program will leave empowered with a deeper grasp of the skills to discern information—its quality, accuracy, biases, omissions, and sometimes hidden agendas.

As Chair of the University of Colorado at Boulder’s Department of Journalism, Skewes will provide vital perspective on the news—specifically the ways in which we get our news and how we inform ourselves about the world in today’s fast-paced information-dense era with so many different sources.

Dr. Skewes teaches courses in news writing, media ethics, and political communication. She is the author of the book “Message Control: How News Is Made on the Presidential Campaign Trail.”

Monday’s presentation will take place at the Library. To help us plan for seating, we ask that you register in advance at estesvalleylibrary.org.

Mark your calendar as well for our second community forum on Thursday, March 8 at 4:30 pm, when we host a panel discussion of local and regional people with insights into today’s media. Among our panelists are Erin O’Toole, assistant news director at KUNC, and Dr. Lynn Schofield Clark, co-author of “Young People and the Future of News”.

Then watch for our hands-on tech literacy program on March 19 titled “Fake News Online”, where we’ll explore some tested strategies to analyze information sources.

Fake news — no better antidote than an informed community coming together for civic dialogue around this troubling phenomenon. And we think there’s no better place for that to begin than the library.