



PRSSA 2023 Bateman Case Study Competition Project Brief

Client information

The News Literacy Project is a nonpartisan education nonprofit building a national movement to advance the practice of news literacy throughout American society to create better informed, more engaged and more empowered individuals – and ultimately a stronger democracy.

Our vision is to see news literacy become an integral part of American life, and people of all ages and backgrounds know how to identify credible news and other information and understand the indispensable role a free press has in a democracy, empowering them to play a more equal and active role in the civic life of the country.

Background information

NLP was [founded in 2008 by Alan C. Miller](#), a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, after he visited his daughter’s middle school classroom to discuss what he did as a journalist and why it mattered. He saw the potential value of having journalists share their experience and expertise in America’s classrooms and helped launch the field of news literacy.

NLP began with a small staff and volunteer journalists working in-person with middle and high school educators and students in select cities. We have expanded dramatically since then, including offering more resources and programs for the general public to help them learn news literacy skills as well. In October 2022, NLP launched a new platform called “[RumorGuard](#)” to help everyone learn how to recognize misinformation and stop it in its tracks. Each fact-checked viral rumor contains concrete tips to help people build a foundation for being news literate and gain confidence in evaluating claims seen online.

NLP’s offerings include weekly newsletters for educators and news consumers, a podcast, events, trainings, an app, PSAs, campaigns to combat COVID and election misinformation, and much more.

NLP and PRSA’s Voices4Everyone (V4E) initiative share a common interest in fighting dis/misinformation. V4E supports a national conversation building mutual understanding, trust, and civic engagement through more inclusive civil discourse. The initiative underscores the role, value, and power of public relations and professional communicators in advancing the public good by:

- Empowering thought leadership and serving as a catalyst for change.
- Harnessing collective expertise and insight.
- Supporting a healthy information environment.
- Fostering meaningful dialogue for informed decision-making.
- Advancing a free, civil, and democratic society.
- Positioning PRSA and PR professionals as influencers and active change agents.

Why is news literacy important?

Misinformation and the lack of news literacy has created an existential threat to our democracy, environment and health. As a result, there is an urgent need for news literacy for people of all ages.

A free and independent press and the ability to determine whether information is credible are necessary for the future of a well-functioning democracy. News literacy teaches about the importance of a free press in our democracy, including how to recognize and demand standards-based journalism, which builds an appreciation for quality journalism. Relying on the standards of fact-based journalism as an aspirational yardstick is the best way to measure the credibility of news and other information.

Misinformation affects everything in our daily lives — from our health care, to our finances, to our environment, to our personal values. And if we can't agree on a set of basic facts, then how can we make well-informed decisions about our lives and our governance.

Consider these findings from an [NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll](#) in January 2020 and the [2018 Edelman Trust Barometer](#), respectively:

- **59%** of Americans say it is hard to identify false information — intentionally misleading and inaccurate stories portrayed as truth — on social media.
- **63%** of people worldwide agree that the average person can't tell good journalism from rumors or falsehoods.

A [Stanford History Education Group 2019 study](#) found that young people, while digital natives, are just as vulnerable:

- **96%** didn't consider why ties between a climate change website and the fossil fuel industry might lessen the site's credibility.
- **68%** couldn't tell the difference between news and “sponsored content” (advertising) on a news site's homepage.
- **52%** believed that a grainy video of ballot-stuffing — actually shot in Russia — was “strong evidence” of voter fraud in the U.S.

Foreign adversaries and domestic bad actors have used misinformation against us in the past, and actively engaged in spreading false information to sow confusion and division during election campaigns.

So why is news literacy important? Because the best way to fight misinformation and minimize its harm is to have a well-informed public that has the ability to discern credible information and reject false information.

Campaign details

We want participants to help us make news literacy a national movement. Over the next four years, we will mobilize — educators, students and the public — to collectively push back

against misinformation in all its forms. This work will move us much closer to changing cultural attitudes toward mis- and disinformation, mirroring previous successful public education efforts that targeted smoking, drunken driving and littering. Our goal is to build a more news-literate nation, and in turn, a more robust, equitable democracy.

To that end, we would like you to develop a comprehensive campaign that:

- Builds greater awareness about the News Literacy Project and its mission.
- Drives people to learn skills that will help them become news literate.
- Realize that they have the power to take action to help stop the spread of misinformation.

We are particularly interested in plans that help galvanize people aged 18–34 and reaches them where they get their news (such as a news website, social media including Snapchat, podcasts, radio, YouTube, broadcast TV, community organizations, WhatsApp and others). The campaign should reach people where they live with messaging that will motivate them to become a part of our movement.

Target audiences

With the launch of our new [RumorGuard](#) platform, NLP is educating the general public about how to become news literate and why it's important for the survival of our democracy. As such, we hope to reach the following demographics as they have frequently been targeted with misinformation (especially during election years):

- Blacks
- Latinos
- Rural news consumers who may live in news deserts

You may choose the audience you plan to focus on, but please be clear about your targets, how you plan to reach them and what messages will resonate. We want your campaigns to appeal to Millennials and Gen Z (18–34 year old).

Aspects of a successful campaign

We believe the biggest challenge we face is in creating a *movement* of people who not only believe they have the power to stop the spread of misinformation but will willingly engage themselves to take action. Those actions could be as simple as sharing a RumorGuard post, commenting on a social media post or group chat and explaining why it's false, organizing a watch party for an NLP webinar or event, or working with an educator (such as a teacher or librarian) to use our resources to teach news literacy.

A successful campaign will inspire young people to become part of our movement. It will help them see how news literacy unites people around facts. That it helps make our democracy stronger by empowering people to be more informed about what's happening in their communities and actively engaging in civic life. Your campaign will remind people about the First Amendment protections of a free press and the right to make your voice heard. It will lead to more civilized conversations, deeper connections, greater respect and

understanding of people who are different from us. And it will make people take pride in being well-informed and making decisions based on facts and evidence rather than fear and falsehoods.

We value the ideas you'll bring to the table, and we encourage you avoid the tried and true, and instead, to seek out innovative ways to reach these audiences where our message of "a future founded on facts" will resonate. NLP is strictly nonpartisan and blaming one side or the other for the misinformation crisis we're facing is not acceptable. Our nonpartisanship is in our DNA and there's evidence of it in everything we do — from our weekly newsletters, to Checkology, to our podcast and more. While we do not seek to change the minds of those who believe in conspiracies or baseless charges that an election was stolen, we believe a successful campaign will reach those in the middle who are confused and searching for trustworthy sources of information. That's the heart of news literacy and a winning campaign will underscore that.

Judging

Our judges will reward entries based on their originality, likelihood of success, ability to implement them and other factors. Key criteria for judging entries includes:

- The overall campaign and creativity.
- Messages you use to reach a desired audience.
- How your entry correlates to building a movement of supporters.
- Your ability to cross political lines and find common ground in a message that unites people.
- Adeptness at using NLP's existing resources to gain support.
- Your defined strategy to reach our disparate audiences.
- Use of social media to build awareness and drive the movement.

Resources

- Homepage – newslit.org
- Comprehensive [resource page](#) for public audience/everyone
- [From Mission to Movement](#) – four-year strategic plan
- [RumorGuard](#) – new platform for the public
- [What is Checkology?](#) and [Explore the Lessons](#)
- [Get Smart About News](#) – weekly newsletter
- [Is that a fact?](#) – podcast
- [Informable](#) – news literacy brain training app
- NLP [FAQ](#)
- [Tools, tips](#), quizzes, shareable infographics and more
- NLP [YouTube page](#) – comprehensive collection of videos
- [NLP Newsroom](#) – press releases, media coverage and more
- [Voices4Everyone](#) – more information on the PRSA initiative