

Information That Matters

Nobody asked but ...

In our Philosophy Shared Interest Group (SIG) this week we will discuss, “best source for truth in current events, and why?” Paul Saffo remarked that Samuel Johnson identified two types of information, that which you knew and that which you knew how to get. Saffo continues that in light of the Internet, Worldwide Web, and technology, we are now cursed with a glut of information, so we need a third type of information — that which matters. For more than a generation now, we have been faced with needing to forget more than we keep. Forgetting has always been important, else detail will drown salience. But because of the detail torrent, the need to manage it is like drinking from a fire hose.

To make matters worse, much of the detail is opinion, interpretation, fiction, not fact. How do you determine what is “fake news?” To have pundits, politicians, and commentators tell us what is fake is the most presumptuous intervention. Can an individual not think, evaluate, and analyze for himself? Or is information of a realistic sort going the way of the dodo? If we do not have critical thinkers, educated beyond schooling, we will not have a sufficient number of curators of the truth.

— Kilgore Forelle