

Reliable Sources

Nobody asked but ...

Where do you go to get reliable accounts of news, weather, and sports? I recently surveyed my students in 4 computer literacy classes regarding this information. On reviewing the results, I stressed to them that a “good” source was no better than its reliability, and furthermore its alignment with the goals of the seeker. Sources should be tested against reality on a regular basis to determine if they are reliable for the uses to which they are put. My students seemed to prefer local TV channels for a reliable mix of local, state, national, and international news — they also felt that most local stations did not have a hidden agenda. I told them a good place to begin elimination was with any sort of cable news. As far as weather is concerned, the pick was the Weather Channel’s web page, but I didn’t get much argument when I suggested that weather was a hit and miss proposition. Recent hurricanes were examples — mainstream weather reporters underestimated Harvey and overhyped Irma. I also saw reports that perhaps the criteria for adjudging storm severity were off kilter. Most of the determinants on hurricanes are related to overwater characteristics, but not much overland metrics apart from storm surge. Lastly, there was nearly unanimous selection of ESPN.com for sports. People liked the breadth and depth. I can even learn of rugby results at ESPN!

— Kilgore Forelle