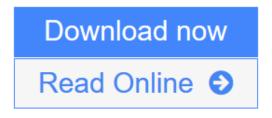# Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload

Bill Kovach , Tom Rosenstiel

Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload

Bill Kovach , Tom Rosenstiel

Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload Bill Kovach , Tom Rosenstiel Amid the hand-wringing over the death of "true journalism" in the Internet Age—the din of bloggers, the echo chamber of Twitter, the predominance of Wikipedia—veteran journalists and media critics Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel have written a pragmatic, serious-minded guide to navigating the twenty-first century media terrain. Yes, old authorities are being dismantled, new ones created, and the very nature of knowledge has changed. But seeking the truth remains the purpose of journalism—and the object for those who consume it. How do we discern what is reliable? How do we determine which facts (or whose opinions) to trust? *Blur* provides a road map, or more specifically, reveals the craft that has been used in newsrooms by the very best journalists for getting at the truth. In an age when the line between citizen and journalist is becoming increasingly unclear, *Blur* is a crucial guide for those who want to know what's true.

Ways of Skeptical Knowing—Six Essential Tools for Interpreting theNews
1. What kind of content am I encountering? 2. Is the information complete? If not, what's missing? 3. Who or what are the sources and why should I believe them? 4. What evidence is presented and how was it tested or vetted? 5. What might bean alternative explanation or understanding? 6. Am I learning what I need?

Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload Details

Date   : Published November 9th 2010 by Bloomsbury USA (first published October 5th 2010)
ISBN   : 9781596915657
Author   : Bill Kovach , Tom Rosenstiel
Format   : Hardcover 240 pages
Genre   : Writing, Journalism, Nonfiction, Language, Communication, Business, Science, Technology

Download and Read Free Online Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload Bill Kovach , Tom Rosenstiel

From Reader Review Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload for online ebook

Bill Anderson says

How to become a more educated user of News

This is a very challenging book and requires a considerable amount of thought and challenges one to the commitment of being a responsible and discerning citizen which requires knowledge, balance, and a desire to explore all facets of an issue and to be aware of one's virus so as to have a balanced opinion that is not dependent on one point of you.

Pauline says

"When information is in greater supply, knowledge becomes harder to create, because we have to sift through more data to arrive at it. Confusion and uncertainty are more likely." Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel illuminate much about the paradox of an "information age" (or perhaps a Disinformation Age) in which misconceptions and bold-faced lies are more abundant than ever, despite the labors of dedicated fact-checkers. Kovach and Rosentiel's impartial analysis of the problem and its possible solution finds matter to blame on both sides of the political shouting match, and offers solutions that don't require you to approve one party or the other. It's worth reading regardless of your political views. Although it's not new (2010), I think their analysis has only become more relevant in the wake of the 2016 election.

Rather than simply blaming the usual suspects (internet culture, too much partisanship, too much pretense of objectivity, or individual "bad apples" in the media), the authors particularly note two trends in the news business (both driven by economics rather than policy) that gave free rein to hyper-partisanship, mushy false-objectivity, and outright lies, well before the internet put all of it on steroids.

First, cable TV brought the 24-hour news day, promising constant "breaking news!" in place of a nightly news broadcast. It created financial incentives for journalists to immediately report every least suspicion and rumor before they get "scooped" by the competition--a stark contrast to the classic journalistic method of verifying facts, discarding unprovable rumors, and creating a polished, reasoned story that not only revealed news but made sense of it. Fact checkers who call out hoaxes after they've spread can never make up for the lack of restraint before publication or broadcast.

Second, cable news stations turned to live interviews rather than recording interviews and embedding them into researched, edited broadcasts that incorporated corroborating (or conflicting) evidence from other sources. Live interviews enable partisans or outright liars to air their talking points unchallenged and unchecked. Efforts to "balance" the effect by pairing interviewees from two opposing viewpoints only leave the viewers with the false sense that all claims are equal, and truth is either subjective or unattainable. Unsure who to believe, many of us (I plead guilty, alas!) turn to the "journalism of affirmation" and select stories that affirm our preconceived views. The rise of internet news makes it easier than ever to read news all day without encountering anything genuinely new or expanding our knowledge in the slightest.

The authors' solution isn't easy: in the absence of editing at the production end, every reader/viewer/consumer of news must take on some of the editor's role in order to make sense of an ever-

expanding array of information, misinformation, and disinformation. We have to be aware what type of material we're seeing, who it's coming from, how it's verified (and if it's verified), why we should believe it, what patterns it might suggest in the context of other news, what alternative explanation there might be for the data points we see, whether we're getting a complete picture, and what else we might need to find out to get the full picture.

I think everybody should read this. I hope the authors will issue a new edition that reflects on more recent trends and events.

Judine Brey says

This book is nicely balanced between real-life events and definitions/analysis of these events. It is both thought-provoking and practical, especially in spelling out what our responsibilities as a news consumer are. Worthwhile as a textbook and a personal reference.

Megan says

Recommended and necessary reading for everyone in this digital age. Much of what is discussed in this book is a mix of journalism and information literacy (from the field of library and information science). As a result, the book serves as a field guide to improving our information diets through selecting the best (most credible, complete, and non-partisan) information sources and resources. Everyone can benefit from reading this book.

Pandasurya says

"Saya percaya, semakin baik mutu jurnalisme, makin baik pula mutu masyarakat."–Bill Kovach

---

Astri Apriyani says

Semua hal di dunia ini pada dasarnya bergerak, tidak statis, tidak ajeg, tidak melulu itu-itu saja. Dunia jurnalisme juga begitu, ternyata. Yang tadinya kita hanya mengenal "jurnalisme sejati" melalui media-media cetak, seiring waktu, kita lalu diperkenalkan dengan yang namanya era baru jurnalisme, yaitu jurnalisme di media siber.

Buku ini dari awal sudah mempertanyakan, siapa itu wartawan? Apakah para penulis berita online di internet, blogger, Tuips (pengguna Twitter yang kadang-kadang juga tidak kalah serius menyampaikan informasi di Twitland), dan sebangsanya?

Bill Kovach dan Tom Rosenstiel datang dengan (bagi saya) pencerahan tentang hal-hal seputar media baru atau jurnalisme baru ini. Lepas dari apakah media di internet bisa disebut jurnalisme ataukah para pelakunya

bisa disebut jurnalis, pada dasarnya kita tetap tidak bisa lepas dari 10 elemen jurnalisme ala Kovach dan Rosenstiel, yang disampaikan dalam buku mereka sebelumnya The Elements of Journalism. Di antara belantara informasi yang sangat lebat seperti sekarang, kita mestinya punya saringan tersendiri untuk bisa mempercayai suatu berita. Butuh verifikasi, butuh menguji kelengkapan fakta, butuh melihat bukti, dan apakah kebenaran yang ada di dalam suatu tulisan berpihak pada rakyat, serta bisa dianggap netral juga independen?

Blur mengupas hal-hal ini, mulai dari memahami apa itu verifikasi dalam jurnalisme, berusaha skeptis (tidak asal menerima) segala informasi yang datang, sampai akhirnya mengetahui sumber pasti serta bukti jelas tentang fakta-fakta yang tertera dalam sebuah tulisan. Pada dasarnya, kita memang tidak akan bisa lepas dari 10 elemen jurnalisme sepanjang hidup kita. Itulah yang akan menyelamatkan kita dari kebimbangan karena derasnya arus informasi kini.

Lalu, di akhir buku, Blur menguraikan apa yang sebetulnya kita butuhkan dari jurnalisme era baru, agar kita tidak tenggelam atau tersesat di dalamnya. Jurnalisme sejati ternyata tidak mati. Ia masih ada di situ, hanya butuh dibangunkan lagi.

Julianna says

A really relevant and useful read. It had a good mix of theoretical ideas and concrete, practical applications. It was painful to read only because it is so utterly applicable right now. It made me think about the consumption of news in new ways, and I really enjoyed the parts on confirmation bias, a topic I have been thinking a lot about lately. I also found the idea that something could be simultaneously true and irrelevant very surprising. I think of truth-finding as the central goal of journalism (ideally) but there is an argument to be made that it should be a quest for relevant truth, and that as consumers we also have the responsibility to find not just accurate news, but accurate news that matters. The book also has this nice literary turn at the end, "If we always arrive exactly where we began, we will not have traveled at all." (169)

Eustacia Tan says

So for this book, I basically wrote my thoughts down as I finished each chapter. Which probably explains why the review is longer than usual...

Chapter 1 reminds me a lot of SS. Basically, there are six steps in "the way of skeptical knowing". They are:

1. Identify the kind of content
2. Determine if the news is complete
3. Assess sources
4. Assess evidence
5. How do new news models interact with evidence? (Is there an alternative explanation or understanding?)
6. Are we getting what we need?

Ok, so only the first three are like SS. But I guess this is like the summary of the book before we even dive

in.

Chapter 2 is a brief history of how we obtained news, and the summary is: this is not new. With every advancement in technology, we gained more access to more types of news. Now, we can get the information we want when we want it, not only when the newspaper comes or when it's the 6pm/9pm/10pm news.

Today, as more and more of our news comes second or third hand, as journalists increasingly are kept at a distance from original sources by communications "managers", and consumers become our own editors and sometimes their own journalists, how do we decide for ourselves whether something is true?

Chapter three starts with the different types of content - "news, propaganda, advertising, publicity, entertainment or raw information." The fact that all these can be mixed reminds me of the Gushcloud hooha, where advertising was made to look like opinion. That's why we have to learn how to discern what is what.

The book also talks about four types of journalism:

1. Verification - the traditional model, focusing on accuracy and context.
2. Assertion - a model that values immediacy and volume.
3. Affirmation - a media based on affirming the beliefs of its audience
4. Interest-group - groups with a vested interest in something (like lobby groups, companies, etc) putting out something that looks and sounds like news, but probably just furthers their own agenda.

By the way, social networks and the likes are forms of communication, not models of content.

How to tell what is what? For verification, look for stories that have multiple sources, that will admit what they do or do not know. Assertion is more or less based on the flow of information. The affirmation model reminds me a lot of what The Filter Bubble says, and well, I think we all know what special interest journalism is. It's just hard to identify it.

Chapter 4 opens with Crewdson, who sounds like an awesome journalist, I kinda want to read some of his stuff now.

So, how do we know if the story is complete?

Well, the basic news story is to have the facts which raise questions.

And since we're talking about facts, if you see fragments of facts but not the whole picture, that's the assertion model. If you see cherry picked facts plus lots of speculation and opinion, it's probably the affirmation model. The affirmation model also tends to use rhetorical questions.

The word news implies things are me and from all around - North, East, West, South; the points on a compass spell out the word news.

This chapter also talks about the types of stories there are - explanatory, authentication, etc.

Chapter 5 is on sources. The central question here is "what are the sources and why should I believe them?" The types of sources mentioned are:

- sourceless: perhaps a public event that everyone can see. This doesn't need special sourcing

- the journalist as witness
- the journalist as credentialed expert
- firsthand accounts

There is, however, the problem of time. Memory can be manipulated, even when the witness doesn't recognise it. That's why corroboration is important.

Other sources include participants (who are not witnesses), expert sources (who may or may not be biased) and of course, the anonymous source.

By the way, beware buzzwords, which can indicate a story is biased in someway, and is basically used to subtly try and persuade you to think a certain way.

Chapter 6 is on "Evidence and the Journalism of Verification". The question here is "What evidence is present, and how was it tested or vetted?" I guess this is when we start using our SS skills.

The chapter uses the Sago case and the alleged John McCain affair to talk about why we need to verify evidence. And how do we check? We should expect a few things:

1. Enough evidence
2. Disproved evidence to have had a fair hearing
3. Acknowledgement of the unknown
4. Coverage to continue

Chapter 7 can be summed as "you really need to make sure the facts are verified and in context". It's basically an elaboration of Chapter 6, with a lot more examples and methods on how you can try to verify the evidence presented.

Chapter 8 asks, "do I know what I need to know?". The first half of the chapter talks more about the different methods that journalists use to discover a story, and the second half is on what we can do to "fulfil our larger responsibilities as news consumers"

Methods include: can I explain this to someone, using questions to test if you have the whole picture, making a list, and others.

But again, I'm reminded of The Filter Bubble. If news is increasing personalised to us, there's an excellent chance that we don't even know what we're missing, and if we don't know that we're ignorant, how can we evaluate the extent of our ignorance?

The last chapter, chapter 9, is titled "What we need from the 'Next Journalism' " It's more for journalists, and talks about the role of the press and what they need to change. Some of the stuff seems to conflict with what I read in The Filter Bubble, so I will have to check that out. (Note to self: check out State of the Media)

And then it's the epilogue and appendix, which doesn't seem to over anything new. It's more of a summary of the book.

Overall, this was an excellent read. And if you read this, I totally suggest reading The Filter Bubble before or after, because both books cover the question of what and how we know, but from two totally different angles.

Michelle says

Such an important read. Explores such important topics regarding how we process information and the role of journalism today. And written pre-Trump. Can't wait to see what they have to say next.

Emma Sea says

This was a sensationalised pop version of the books on the media industry I've been reading lately. The writing style is designed to sex up the information and make it more captivating to an audience who has grown used to infotainment. The unfortunate irony was enough to make this a dnf.

Sherin says

really good book for those who find it hard to figure out what is real and not in the world of information overload.

Nathan says

And another First Reads win.

I was hoping this would address digital media more than it does. The focus of the book is on journalism so the book probably would appeal to journalists and journalism students moreso than other readers. There is some interesting information here but I had hoped for more impact and more readability.

Julia says

The matarial is certainly thought-provoking, especially their examination of the "Journalism of Affirmation" which made me realize how much I, as well as most others, select my sources of information based on the ones with which I agree the most. Whether MSNBC or Fox, such journalists WANT to create an atmosphere of argument rather than the validation of evidence required for the "Journalism of Verification".

The strongest point for me is the idea of our OWN responsibility in choosing our sources of information. Gone are the days when a Walter Cronkite would verify the news FOR us. Ever since the advent of 24/7 news coverage, the "blur" of information overload has become increasingly overwhelming.

I really like the last chapter, which stressed that we should first decide WHAT we want to have information about--and suddenly I was liberated from having to think of news as mainly political. The authors suggest that we should have a list of interests and hone in on deepening our knowledge about and appreciation of

THOSE interests--rather than letting the bombardment of media choose for us.

The only reason I gave this a 3 star is that the writing was repetitive and poorly organized--I actually had to outline the book to keep it straight in my mind!

Steven S says

Blur take reader define news product, whether it's true or not from massive flood of information.

Compelling book to know deeper how journalism and it's evolving role take place in post-truth era.

Nice reading for anyone who have interest in media.

Carrie says

Probably the best book (other than Elements) that I have ever read to teach journalism students what they need to know about what it really means to be a journalist, even though the book is also aimed at a broader audience of news consumers.

Although I'm biased since I used to work for Bill and Tom, I think that what they have done here is tremendous, because it is an artful marriage of the core values of journalism and how to keep them alive with a keen understanding of how journalism is changing in the digital age. That is far too rare; most writing on the subject end up as a polemic of one or the other.

The majority of old-school journalism academics I know, for example, expound lustily about the importance of accuracy and verification, but they don't acknowledge how the gatekeeping role has changed, how we can look beyond the narrative as a unit to present journalism, how digital tools make journalism BETTER and how we need to think about journalism as a function we provide for communities, not a product.

This book also takes a concept that, while critical, can seem kind of abstract to most people - getting it right is key, but exactly how can I be sure I'm doing that - and gives it some precision and clarity.

It's not quite a fit for the classes I'm teaching right now, but I'd highly recommend it to journalism professors in lieu of a traditional textbook.