# Making Sense of Media bulletin

## July 2020

Thank you to everyone who sent in updates for this Making Sense of Media July bulletin, a round-up of your initiatives, research, and events.

We have provided points of contact wherever possible, so that members can contact each other, particularly if there is interest in collaboration or sharing of resources.

Each summary is included alphabetically under one of the categories below; please click on one of the quick links if you would like to go directly to this category. Note that inclusion here does not imply endorsement by Ofcom.

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# Ofcom activity

## Events

On 12 June, 50 of you joined us for our first virtual Making Sense of Media Network event. The Teens Talk Tech event included videos that Year 9 children from four UK schools recorded with their peers, with the aim of teaching us about a range of topics: what they enjoy doing online, what concerns them about participating online, what they think needs to change, and how. It gave us a fascinating glimpse into the online lives of Year 9 schoolchildren, and it was great to see such a high level of attendance and engagement with the content.

## Research

Our online [Covid-19 news and information survey](#) provides updates on the habits and opinions of c.2,000 UK participants each week. Throughout lockdown, we have been monitoring the news and information sources that people are using to keep up to date about the pandemic, their levels of trust in these sources, their general attitudes to them, as well as the extent to which people are following government advice. We also ask whether people have come across any misinformation and if so, how frequently and which types. We publish the underlying datasets and encourage you to use these for your own further analysis.

On 24 June we published four reports:

### Adults' Media Use and Attitudes

Our annual Adults' Media Use and Attitudes report provides evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding, and how these change over time, among UK adults aged 16 and over. It has a particular focus on critical thinking, or awareness, which is a core component of media literacy, enabling people to assess and evaluate their media environment. The survey includes those who tend not to participate digitally.

### Adults' Media Lives

We published the fifteenth wave of our ethnographic video study, the Adults' Media Lives report. This qualitative study tracks the same people over time, and highlights the changing nature of their relationship with digital media, from use to understanding and concerns. Although the number of participants is relatively small, they reflect a broad cross-section of the UK population in terms of age, location, ethnicity and social circumstances.

### Online Nation

Our second annual Online Nation report looks at what people in the UK are doing online, how they are served by online content providers and platforms, and their experiences of using the internet, alongside business models and industry trends. This year's report covers the radical change that 'lockdown' has had on the UK's online habits, revealing that during the height of lockdown UK adults spent a record average of four hours a day online.

The report looks in detail at the dramatic growth of online communications platforms such as Zoom and Houseparty alongside video sharing platforms such as TikTok and Twitch, as lockdown forced us to find new ways to keep connected, informed, entertained and fit.

### Online Harms

Our latest quantitative research into internet users' experience of harms online is carried out in conjunction with the ICO. The research surveys the views and experiences of over 4,000 UK internet users (including adults and 12-15s). It provides detail on the concerns people have, their reported experiences of, and the potential sources of, online harm in three main categories, as well as views about current levels of regulation:

- content that people view, read or listen to online and interactions with other users;
- data/privacy; and
- hacking/security.

## Making Sense of Media advisory panel meeting

Ofcom's Making Sense of Media Advisory Panel met for the fifth time on 3 June.

The panel comprises 12 expert representatives from across industry, academia and the third sector, who meet regularly to debate and help inform the overall direction of Ofcom's online media literacy programme.

Attendees provided updates on recent work and had a preview of the headlines from the research to be published on 24 June. The panel also had an update on VSP regulation. Ofcom is expected to acquire new duties to regulate UK-based video-sharing platforms (VSPs) under the revised Audio-

Visual Media Service Directive (AVMSD). Under this regime, VSPs will be required to have in place measures to protect their users, including media literacy measures and tools. A call for evidence will be published during the summer.

## Keep in touch

If you would like more information on any of Ofcom's Making Sense of Media work, please email us at makingsenseofmedia@ofcom.org.uk

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# Latest research

## Beano Studios

Beano Brain, the London insights consultancy from Beano Studios, has engaged with 3 million children and conducted over 100 hours of interviews since March, sharing weekly insight snapshots and full monthly reports.

Generation Alpha - those born after 2010 - has proved to be very different, behaviourally, from previous cohorts. They are being affected in many ways and these may well be the defining moments of their young lives.

So far, Generation Alpha have shown their resilience, embracing their digital mastery to hack digital platforms and create virtual playgrounds. Digital platform diversification has increased, with children seeking play and escapism while connecting with friends and family. After "chatting and catching up" (58%), gaming is the most common thing to do and share on a video call, for UK children aged 7-14 (48%).

46% of 7-14s asked did not want to go back to school, due to the freedom of working and taking breaks when it suits them, rather than sticking to rigid classroom routines. And only a quarter (28%) think lessons are better at school or are worried they've forgotten everything (28%).

Despite being together all day, dedicated family time remains important: almost half of all children asked (44%) want more great shows for their family to watch together. And the focus on family time has seen them self-regulating their online behaviour, flattening the pre-lockdown 8pm peak so families can spend time together in the evening.

## DCMS

**Calling all SMEs - please complete and share this 5-minute survey by 10 July on how to improve children's online safety.**

The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) has created a short survey to better understand business perspectives when adopting child online safety practices. BIT hopes to reach as many businesses as possible, particularly small businesses and other SMEs.

## Internet Matters

Internet Matters' latest research report [Look at Me, Teens, Sexting and Risk](#) draws on insight from a cybersurvey of over 6000 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17.

Key findings include:

- vulnerable teenagers are far more likely than their non-vulnerable peers to send intimate pictures;
- 18% of the teenagers in the survey had sent images under pressure;
- sexting is not endemic, but numbers double each year between ages 13 and 15;
- 78% of teens said that 'nothing bad had happened' as a result of sending an image; and
- for those to whom bad things did happen, these events were severe.

[Connecting Safely Online](#) is a new microsite, created for young people with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) and their parents and carers. The microsite was created by Internet Matters and Youthworks and was made possible through the support of Facebook.

This resource allows young people with SEND to explore how to stay safe online in a way that works for them - and provides their parents with resources and, crucially, things to do together. Young people were involved in every aspect of the creation of the site, from explaining how they use the internet and what challenges they face, to reviewing the content and the look and feel of the design of the site and ensuring that the navigation worked for them.

The accompanying report [Telling it Like it Is](#) captures the insights and thoughts of young people with SEND and their parents and carers, and explains why the microsite has been developed in the way it has.

For more information, contact [Claire.levens@internetmatters.org](mailto:Claire.levens@internetmatters.org)

## King's College London

[A new UK study](#) by King's College London and Ipsos MORI has found that people who get their information about coronavirus from social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are more likely to believe conspiracy theories about Covid-19 and to have broken key lockdown rules.

The findings are based on three separate surveys, and have been published in a [peer-reviewed article](#) by King's College London academics in the leading journal *Psychological Medicine*.

The researchers tested seven statements about coronavirus, several of which are conspiracy theories that suggest coronavirus may not be a threat to public health. The peer-reviewed article finds a statistically significant link between believing in such conspiracy theories and using social media.

In particular, people who believe in these conspiracy theories are more likely to get a fair amount or great deal of their information about coronavirus from Facebook and YouTube:

- 60% of those who believe the virus is linked to 5G radiation get their information from YouTube, compared with 14% of those who think that's false.

- 56% of people who believe there's no hard evidence Covid-19 exists use Facebook as a key information source, almost three times higher than the proportion of non-believers who do (20%).

The article also finds that people who have broken the lockdown rules are more likely to be getting their information on the virus from social media. In the latest and most comprehensive survey:

- 58% of those who have gone outside with Covid-19 symptoms use YouTube as a main information source, compared with 16% of those who haven't.
- 37% of people who have had friends or family visit them at home list Facebook as a key source, compared with 23% of those who haven't.

For more information, contact:

Dr Daniel Allington, Senior Lecturer in Social and Cultural Artificial Intelligence, King's College London daniel.allington@kcl.ac.uk

Professor Bobby Duffy, Director of the Policy Institute, King's College London bobby.duffy@kcl.ac.uk@bobbyduffykings

## Loughborough University

In a new study published in Social Media + Society (open access), Professors Cristian Vaccari and Andrew Chadwick (Online Civic Culture Centre, Loughborough University) investigate the effects of 'deepfakes', also known as 'synthetic media': audiovisual clips created with the support of artificial intelligence (AI) that can be nearly impossible to distinguish from authentic content.

Professors Vaccari and Chadwick conducted an online experiment on 2,005 respondents recruited from a large panel maintained by Opinium Research and representative of the voting-age UK population in terms of gender, age, and educational attainment. The results show that people are more likely to feel uncertain than to be misled by deepfakes, but this resulting uncertainty, in turn, reduces trust in news on social media.

Professors Vaccari and Chadwick conclude that deepfakes' biggest threat to democracy may not be direct but indirect. Deepfakes might not always fool viewers into believing in something false, but they might contribute to scepticism and distrust of news sources, further eroding our ability to meaningfully discuss public affairs. If left unchecked, deepfakes are likely to contribute to a damaging attitudinal spiral: fabricated content shared on social media breeds uncertainty; uncertainty breeds distrust; distrust breeds cynicism; and cynicism makes people less careful about the quality of the content they share on social media. This study has recently been featured in The Washington Post.

For more information, contact: c.vaccari@lboro.ac.uk a.chadwick@lboro.ac.uk

## LSE

ySKILLS aims to identify groups of children who are at a greater risk of having low levels of well-being because of their ICT use, and to understand how digital skills can function as protective factors, building resilience and shielding children from harm.

The project examines the risks and opportunities related to children's ICT use, and the role of digital skills in their cognitive, physical, psychological and social well-being. It involves longitudinal research with children aged 12 to 17 to obtain evidence on how to enhance and maximise the long-term positive impacts of the ICT environment on multiple aspects of children's well-being, by stimulating their resilience through enhancing their digital skills. The first output will be in October 2020: a systematic evidence-based review of the antecedents and consequences of children's digital skills. The LSE is a partner on this project.

The LSE book *Parenting for a Digital Future: How hopes and fears about technology shape children's lives* reveals the pincer movement of parenting in recent times. Parents are both increasingly burdened with responsibilities (given the erosion of state support and an increasingly uncertain financial future) and are also charged with respecting the agency of their child – leaving much to negotiate in today's 'democratic' families. The book charts how parents now, often, enact authority and values through digital technologies – as 'screen time,' games or social media become both ways of being together and of setting boundaries. For many parents, digital technologies introduce opportunities to develop new digital skills and literacies for themselves and their children. To light their way, parents comb through the hazy memories of their own childhoods and look towards varied imagined futures. This results in deeply diverse parenting in the present, as parents move between embracing, resisting or balancing the role of technology in their own and their children's lives. The work is being blogged at Parenting for a Digital Future.

For more information, contact s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk or @Livingstone_S or www.sonialivingstone.net

## New Era

Following lockdown at the end of March 2020, schools entered an unprecedented period of remote teaching and learning. Some schools were well-prepared, others less so.

New Era's Technology Survey investigates what schools did and why they did so, to give some insights into the state of media literacy in primary schools across the UK.

Key findings include:

- Schools invariably use the learning platform DB Primary, due to its ease of use for adults and children. Schools need a level of digital sophistication, and a variety of tools to support online learning in different formats, enabling work to be submitted and assessed and to support communication and collaboration, but they need this in an age-appropriate context.
- Schools require environments that are age-appropriate as well as being safe and secure; this was one of the key influencers for schools. The systems used must allow activity to be monitored; there must be a clear audit trail and a secure login; data privacy must be assured and the provider fully GDPR-compliant.
- Schools said they needed an environment in which children could not only learn the wider curriculum but could also be informed about digital citizenship and digital well-being, whether this is delivered face to face or remotely. It is important for children to have the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with their peers in an environment where risk is controlled.

For more information, contact Colin Green [Cgreen@neweraed.co.uk](mailto:Cgreen@neweraed.co.uk)

## Qustodio

Qustodio is a parental control app created by digital safety and wellbeing experts and developers.

The recent Qustodio report on children's digital habits is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The report involved 60,000 4-15 year-olds and their parents in the U.S., the U.K. and Spain between February 2019 and April 2020, with a special look into the changes during Covid-19 (March-April 2020).

The report includes an industry trend summary for four popular app categories: online video, social media, video games and education. It looks at how children have used apps in these categories, over the past year and during Covid-19. It concludes with some predictions about what might come next 'the new normal', and advice from various experts - psychologists, physicians and technology experts.

For more information, contact Jennifer Allerson [jen.allerson@qustodio.com](mailto:jen.allerson@qustodio.com)

## Reuters Institute and University of Oxford

[Digital News Report 2020](#) covers 40 markets, including for the first time Kenya and the Philippines. It offers insights on misinformation, trust in news, local journalism, digital subscriptions, and covers politics and climate change.

This year the executive summary has been translated [into Spanish](#). The Reuters Institute has also prepared a [podcast](#) on the report.

Highlights of the report include:

- More people pay for news, some would never do so
- The pandemic accelerates the shift to digital
- Concerns about platforms and domestic politicians

## University of Sheffield

The Centre for Freedom of the Media (CFOM) at the University of Sheffield has conducted a two-year comprehensive [study of editorial standards of accuracy and complaints-handling](#), pre- and post-IPSO. At a time of intense political debate about disinformation in general, and also in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, the ability to find accurate and trustworthy information has never been more important.

The aim of the research, conducted by Dr. Chrysi Dagoula (University of Groningen), Professor Jackie Harrison (University of Sheffield) and Dr. Irini Katsirea (PI) (University of Sheffield) is to explore member publishers' editorial standards and, in particular, whether and how standards of complaints handling have changed within the industry.

Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines quantitative and qualitative methods to understand what impact, if any, IPSO has had on standards at member publishers, measured by the

prominence, speed and adequacy of corrections. The research focused on 17 publications, covering a range of daily national newspapers, Sunday editions, and a sample of regional newspapers.

The researchers found that more professional and systematic complaints handling processes and greater transparency about newspapers' policies have been introduced under IPSO. This improvement in processes has translated into a partial improvement in the prominence, speed and adequacy of corrections.

For more information, contact i.katsirea@sheffield.ac.uk

## Which?

*Research on how fake reviews can influence consumers to make poor choices*

A behavioural experiment by Which? and The Behaviouralist found that fake customer reviews had a strong impact on consumer choices, leading many away from choosing high quality products and towards a Which? Don't Buy.

In the experiment almost 10,000 consumers completed a survey-based shopping task online, where they had to choose their favoured option from five identically priced products, including a Which? Don't Buy. Each participant in the experiment was randomly allocated into one of six groups, with some seeing only natural review content (control group) and others seeing varying additions of fake reviews to the Don't Buy option.

The research found that all the fake review treatments significantly increased the likelihood of a consumer choosing the Don't Buy product as their favoured option. 10.5% of consumers chose the Don't Buy in the control group and this more than doubled to 23.1% with the addition of inflated star ratings and faked review text, designed to mirror fake review activity that Which? has observed in real life. Adding a platform endorsement further increased the proportion of consumers choosing the poor product. The research also found that the addition of a simple warning banner on search and product pages could reduce the harm from fake reviews by about 20%, but this was far from sufficient to remove the harm completely.

For more information, contact Matt.Gardner@which.co.uk

*Are you following me? Consumer attitudes to data collection methods for targeting advertising.*

Online platforms have brought huge benefits to consumers, and provide their services at no financial cost. Consumers are, however, 'paying' with their data. Monetisation comes through serving targeted adverts based on data collected on an individual. For example, according to the CMA, Facebook has a share of almost 50% of the £5bn display advertising market in the UK.

It has been widely recognised that consumers don't have enough control over their data and that this needs to change. The CMA is considering requiring a default 'opt-in' to targeted advertising on some platforms. But there has been little research on whether consumers care how their data is collected for targeted advertising.

To address this, Which? carried out qualitative research (face-to-face interviews) to explore the attitudes of Facebook users to three methods of data collection. The research included first-party

data collection (tracking on their own platforms and using profile information) and third-party (tracking activity on other websites and apps and matching profiles to uploaded customer lists).

It was found that:

- Consumers were shocked by the extent of third-party data collection and strongly felt that there was a lack of transparency over their use.
- Third-party data collection methods were generally considered less acceptable because of perceptions of legitimacy, privacy, the perceived proportionality and relevance of the data collection for targeted advertising and the level of control available.
- People had a clear preference to opt-in, rather than opt-out, to data collection for targeted advertising and wanted to be asked to consent to each data collection method individually.

For more information, contact Harriet.Pickles@which.co.uk


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# Projects and initiatives

## BBC

In May the BBC published some new online media literacy resources for young people. These included the BBC Young Reporter news literacy video resources: 'Accuracy and Impartiality' and 'Fact vs Opinion' featuring BBC News staff, including Media Editor Amol Rajan and BBC Reality Check journalists. You can view these here.

BBC Young Reporter is now delivering the news literacy workshops virtually to schools, colleges and youth groups. For information register here or contact youngreporter@bbc.co.uk

BBC Bitesize also added to the online materials aimed at 11-16 year olds in the 'Fact or Fake' collection.

The BBC Disinformation team, a Trusted News Initiative partner comprising specialist journalists, is working across BBC Reality Check, BBC Trending and BBC Monitoring, continuing to fact-check and report on disinformation and misleading stories and social media across all BBC programmes and platforms. Recent content particularly reflects the coronavirus pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests and looking ahead to the US election. This reporting is collated here.

For more information, contact Josie Verghese – Head of BBC Young Reporter, BBC News josie.verghese@bbc.co.uk


## BT

BT has created a series of Top Tips on Tech videos, supported by simple step-by-step guides to help everyone to make the most of tech during lockdown.

Originally played as twice-daily ITV ad takeovers, the videos feature well-known faces including David Walliams, Clare Balding and Gareth Southgate. They cover topics such as home schooling, keeping connected using WhatsApp, staying safe online, and more.

The films and guides are available at: https://www.bt.com/tech-tips.

Top Tips on Tech is just one of the ways in which BT is helping 10 million people improve their skills to make the most of life in the digital world, as part of its BT Skills for Tomorrow programme. Find more at: https://www.bt.com/SkillsforTomorrow.

For more information, contact Jessica Rose jessica.rose@bt.com

## British Board of Film Classification

Since April, the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) has been working on an education initiative to support families who have found themselves home-schooling due to lockdown. It has created a range of free educational resources, videos, case studies and interactive web activities and has promoted its website and app on social media channels to help families choose content well and avoid potentially distressing material.

The BBFC also commissioned research in May which showed that children and teens are being exposed to harmful or upsetting content while in lockdown. The research revealed that nearly half (47%) of children and teens had seen content they would rather avoid during lockdown, and that just under a third (29%) had been left uncomfortable by this. The same research showed that over half (53%) of parents say they haven't spoken to their children about their increased time online during lockdown, with a third (29%) saying they didn't think those chats would make a difference.

It showed that 82% of parents, and three-quarters (73%) of children want to see trusted BBFC age ratings and ratings info displayed on user-generated content platforms like YouTube, so they can avoid content that might upset or disturb them. And 95% of parents said they wanted age ratings on user-generated content platforms, linked to parental filters.

For more information, contact Sarah Peacock, Compliance and Education Manager education@bbfc.co.uk

## Community Media Association

The Community Media Association took the opportunity to highlight in Radio Today, the radio industry's news platform, some of the good things going on in community radio in response to the Covid-19 epidemic.

The examples of best practice include a project to distribute hundreds of free radio sets to vulnerable and isolated residents in Basildon. The Unity101 radio station in Southampton has raised funds to buy three 3D printers to make visors for frontline staff. And most community radio stations have reported a surge in listeners, volunteer hours, and engagement with the station.

## Digital 4 Seniors and Advice NI

Advice NI travelled to Australia and Japan to explore how digital inclusion learning programmes in both countries were enabling older people to reap the benefits of the internet.

This research builds on Advice NI's digital inclusion initiatives by bringing back ideas and knowledge to inform proposals in key policy areas, to ensure that older people can take advantage of digital systems and processes as services move online.

## Facebook

Facebook, in consultation with Full Fact, has launched an advertising campaign to improve people's awareness of fake news shared online, as platforms continue to find ways to address misinformation. The ads, encouraging users to question what they read online will appear from July on Facebook across the UK, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Turkey, alongside a dedicated advice website.

The campaign is based on tips jointly developed by Full Fact, Maldita.es in Spain, Correctiv in Germany, and Pagella Politica in Italy. Users will be asked three questions: to check whether a post is from a trusted source; to ensure they read beyond headlines; and to be alert to manipulated images, as well as reflecting on how the post makes them feel. Facebook and Full Fact worked together on how the campaign will be evaluated.

Since the coronavirus outbreak began Facebook reports that it has removed hundreds of thousands of items of coronavirus-related misinformation that could contribute to imminent physical harm, such as false claims about cures and harmful content that links 5G technology to the disease.

## FactCheck NI

FactCheckNI, Northern Ireland's dedicated fact-checking service, has established a working partnership with the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN), a community-based organisation with expertise in health literacy, to provide accurate and up-to-date information about Covid-19 and related complex health matters.

The two leading organisations have set up the Covid-19 Information Dissemination (COVID-19 ID) Project, which will share official information, fact check unofficial information about Covid-19, counteract misinformation and provide health literacy-friendly information to the public.

So far, FactCheckNI and CDHN have written and distributed explainer articles about: the rules of lockdown; how Covid-19 decisions are made in Northern Ireland; the recovery plan from lockdown; shielding; and face masks/coverings. FactCheckNI has also published fact checks on testing, counting Covid-19 deaths, and pets and Covid-19. You can view all this fact-checked material at FactCheckNI and CDHN.

If you see information about Covid-19 that you think should be fact-checked, and/or want to learn something more about Covid-19 and can't find it, please contact Dr Orna Young at FactCheckNI online or orna@factcheckni.org.

## IMPRESS

On 3 June, IMPRESS and MRS co-organised an open webinar, based on the guidance 'Using Polls, Surveys and Research in your Journalism' which they recently co-produced.

During the webinar, industry experts Cordelia Hay (Associate Partner, Britain Thinks) and Adam Drummond (Associate Director, Opinium) provided a hands-on, practical overview of quantitative and qualitative research and useful advice to journalists on incorporating research into their reporting. The speakers focused in particular on Covid-19 coverage, as well as tips on covering the upcoming US General Election.

The session was chaired by Laura Hood, Politics Editor of The Conversation, and introduced by IMPRESS Head of Regulation, Lexie Kirkconnell-Kawana.

Key learnings and highlights from the webinar are available here.

For more information, contact info@impressreg.org.uk  +44 020 3325 4288  www.impress.press

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## InformAll

**Information literacy for education – a call for expressions of interest**
This is a call for media and information literacy (IL) to be recognised as a key pillar of the school education system. Please consider signing the statement and help to influence the future shape of the curriculum.

IL, which is closely aligned with media literacy, is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to develop informed views and to engage fully with society.

While the need for IL has been widely recognised by stakeholders across the UK education sectors, as well as by employers and representatives of civil society, such recognition has not yet led to anything approaching a coherent strategy or programme of IL education. The statement therefore calls for the development of school education policies and practices that foster inquisitiveness, informed, inquiry-led learning and critical thinking. IL (and also media literacy) is an integral part of this desired outcome. It is recognised that the school curriculum is not about to change quickly. It is understood too that the huge disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic mean that educationalists and teachers have their hands more than full right now. But we are living through a time of disruption, and perhaps this is the moment to start reflecting anew on the fundamentals of what we expect from school education.

## ISD

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) continues to investigate how Covid-19 is discussed, manipulated and understood online, publishing relevant data and reporting across the globe. Its Digital Analysis Unit produces regular Covid-19 briefings, which outline trending conspiracy theories and targeted disinformation campaigns around the pandemic. These include how extremist and/or radical movements are weaponising the crisis, either to sow division or to direct hate towards specific minority groups.

The unit also tracks which platforms are seeing spikes in misinformation or other malign behaviour, including major tech giants like Facebook, Twitter, Google, Instagram and YouTube, and niche or emerging platforms like Reddit, 4chan, Gab and TikTok. On Monday 15th June it published a

report that evaluates responses to Covid-19 from three major companies, and shows what this reveals about digital resilience more broadly.

In the education space, ISD is currently refreshing the curriculum for Be Internet Citizens, a programme funded by Google which has already reached over 65,000 students and 650 educators across the UK. New units of work will be ready for the 2020-21 academic year, reflecting the latest insight on online harms as well as recent events like Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter.

The programme's European counterpart – Young Digital Leaders – also released an updated curriculum, a parents' guide and a programming toolkit on digital literacy earlier this year. Last month, ISD presented at a South By Southwest (SXSW) panel: 'Preventing Violent Extremism in the Classroom', hosted by the US State Department and featuring film-makers, academics, former extremists and ex-mayor of Anaheim, Tom Tait.

ISD produces monthly digests which bring together its recent articles, podcasts, webinars, reports and briefings.

For further information on ISD's work, please contact jk@isdglobal.org or media@isdglobal.org, or visit www.isdglobal.org.


## Liverpool John Moores University and Goldsmiths, University of London

Fran Yeoman (Liverpool John Moores University) and Kate Morris (Goldsmiths, University of London) are journalism lecturers researching news literacy in the UK and are in receipt of a British Academy/ Leverhulme grant to map the news literacy landscape in the UK. The British Academy/ Leverhulme-funded project, mapping the news literacy landscape in the UK, began in March.

The first stage of the project was information-gathering about the initiatives in this field that are currently operating, and this was run by research assistant Dr Chris Hayes. Given the circumstances, the project's remit was expanded to map news literacy responses in the UK to the coronavirus pandemic.

The authors are particularly interested in hearing how the virus has affected your activities and whether you are intending to increase any work you are doing around news and information literacy in the light of the Covid-19 misinformation we have seen circulating online.

Many thanks to those who have already responded to requests from Chris for information. For those who haven't, Fran and Kate would be extremely grateful if you could share your news literacy activities, either in general, or around Covid-19 in particular.

For more information, contact newsliteracy@ljmu.ac.uk


## Media Smart

Media Smart's educational resources have been more in demand during lockdown, as teachers and parents look for resources and support with remote learning. The programme has had 68,000 downloads and in April the website received 26,000 visitors (in comparison to a normal monthly average of 11,000).

The team launched the 'Creating an Advert' resource in March, based on the 'Eat Them To Defeat Them' advertising campaign. This is an inspiring film-based educational resource encouraging young people aged 11-16 into creative careers – alongside a healthy eating message.

Media Smart has recently been shortlisted in two categories for The Corporate Engagement Awards (I) Best Educational Programme and (II) Best Charity, NGO or NFP Programme. And Media Smart's Director, Rachel Barber-Mack, is a finalist for the 2020 Global Good Individual Leader of the Year for her work on the programme.

The programme will be releasing another three educational resources in the coming months on Branded Content, Piracy & Intellectual Property, and Managing Your Online Adverts.

If you would like more information please contact Rachel Barber-March on mediasmart@adassoc.org.uk

## NewsWise

In response to the closure of schools in March, NewsWise launched a family home-schooling hub of activities. The aim is to support children and parents to understand, navigate and manage wellbeing around news.

The Happy News project encourages children to share happy news stories with top tip videos from a number of journalists from The Guardian. NewsWise developed these activities to give parents, teachers and children some tools to manage their feelings about news, and to remind themselves that there was still happy news around too.

NewsWise is planning to roll out 'virtual NewsWise workshops' shortly, and throughout the autumn term. For more information contact newswise@theguardianfoundation.org

## NI Cyber Security Centre

The NI Cyber Security Centre works to make Northern Ireland cyber-safe, secure and resilient for its citizens and businesses. It focuses on ensuring that we have a better-informed society and business community to better protect our technology, systems and data from cyber-attacks.

Through a series of monthly articles, the NI Cyber Security Centre aims to increase citizens' 'knowledge of cyber-threats and the actions people can take when online to protect themselves and their family members, homes and businesses.

CyberFirst courses are being provided online throughout July and August to help more than a thousand 14-17 year olds develop cyber-skills. Students will learn how to code and carry out cybersecurity operations in a virtual classroom.

World Password Day was celebrated on 7 May; the NI Cyber Security Centre encouraged all citizens to take the 'Password Pledge' to secure their online accounts from hackers.

For more information, contact Info@nicybersecuritycentre.gov.uk

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# International

## Regulators, Covid-19 and Media Literacy

European networks have published [overviews of regulatory and media literacy responses](#) to the Covid-19 crisis.

The EPRA Network, where Ofcom is a member of the Board, has analysed various responses, including support for media businesses and media literacy activities. EPRA's resources include a detailed [case study on how EPRA members engage with citizens during the Covid-19 crisis](#) supplemented by an [overview table](#) of the relevant measures.

The ERGA group, representing EU Member State regulators, has also produced an [overview table](#) of national government, regulatory and civil society actions on disinformation (focusing extensively on media literacy initiatives) and Covid-19.


## Global

### United Nations

The *'[Pause, take care before you share](#)'* campaign, launched on 30 June (World Social Media Day) is part of the UN's 'Verified' initiative, which aims to encourage everyone to check the advice they share.

The UN aims to create a new social norm: 'Rules of the road', for how people share content on social media. The campaign asks people to:

- Pause, take care before you share
- Share stories, examples and testimonies of the impact of fake news and misinformation on your work, using #takecarebeforeyoushare
- Share content from the United Nations, created for World Social Media day


### Australia

Australia's eSafety Commissioner released new [global online safety advice for young children, parents and carers](#). This detailed booklet is based on eSafety's popular [Early Years content](#), adapted for an international audience. The advice is available as both an e-book and an editable PDF that can be localised with relevant in-country information and helplines/support agencies.

eSafety has also developed an online safety activity to accompany the global online safety booklet, so parents and carers can learn together, along with their children. These [Story Puzzles](#) are a fun and engaging way for parents, carers and children to learn about a range of online safety issues and how to tackle them.

### Canada

MediaSmarts, Canada's not-for-profit centre for digital literacy, has launched its *[Check First. Share After](#)* campaign to encourage everyone to check the source of information about Covid-19 before sharing it.

The main message of the campaign is that most of us probably can't manufacture protective equipment in our homes, or develop a treatment for the virus, but there is something we can all do: help stop the spread of misinformation.

The campaign features a video PSA, an educational website CheckThenShare.ca and an extensive social media campaign. During a pandemic, where every share of misinformation can be harmful to our health and well-being, it's more important than ever to turn to trusted expert sources for information about the virus.

For more information, contact info@mediasmarts.ca

## Focus on EU developments

**EDMO.EU**

The European Digital Media Observatory was launched on 1 June. This online resource focuses on tackling disinformation; it is funded by the European Commission but operates as an independent project with its own governance structure and is run out of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. EDMO has been set up as a platform to bring together fact-checkers, media literacy experts and academic researchers with the common aim of understanding and analysing disinformation, in collaboration with media organisations, online platforms and media literacy practitioners.

The resource is yet to be populated, but intends to promote scientific knowledge on online disinformation, to advance the development of EU fact-checking services and to support media literacy programmes. EDMO will also offer support to regulators, and its intention is to help find a way to enable trusted sharing of data for research.

Its stated aims are:

- Providing media practitioners, teachers and citizens with information and material aimed at increasing awareness, building societal resilience to online disinformation and supporting media literacy campaigns (i.e. media literacy resources that can be shared and used).
- Becoming the reference point for promoting European and national media literacy activities related to the disinformation problem, and providing evidence for future-proof policies on disinformation (sharing best practice to promote media literacy).
- Building a repository of policy papers and other relevant content, including media literacy material specific to the disinformation phenomenon (a searchable research database).

**European Commission**

A webinar on 'Media literacy and Disinformation on COVID 19' is taking place on Monday 6 July, 1130-1300 UK time, hosted by CONNECT University.

Panellists will discuss:

- How can our societies become better informed? What tools do we have to guarantee the trustworthiness of information available for Europeans?
- How can EU citizens become more resilient against disinformation and its temptations to make quick, possibly irrational conclusions?
- What has media literacy learned from COVID19 crisis? How to retain that wisdom?
- What are the next steps for media literacy, building on this experience, from the angles of academia, media literacy practitioners, member states, fact checkers?

Speakers are:

- Divina Frau-Meigs, Professor New Sorbonne University (Paris 3) and member of the recent High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation;
- Mikko Salo, Founder of the Finnish fact checking organisation Faktabaari and member of the recent High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation;
- Agnieszka Ostrowska, Start2Think ML project CSM, Poland; and
- Robert Tomljenovic, Vice-President of Electronic Media Council and member of the Media Literacy Expert Group.

You can find more details here.


**EU Policy on Media Literacy**

On 26 May the EU member states set out common policy recommendations: Media Literacy in a Digital Age. These focus on the need to tackle disinformation, and indicate the EU's thinking on media literacy policy.

The recommendations position media literacy at the centre of media policy, seeing it as critical to delivering on all of the objectives: ensuring plurality in a time of algorithmic curation; audience protection; tackling the social threat of mis- and dis-information; and providing for the economic sustainability of content industries. These are some of the highlights of what EU governments think media literacy policy should look like, and who should be responsible for delivering it:

- **Media literacy is understood very broadly at EU level**: the definition of media literacy given is more akin to citizenship skills.
- **Member States are urged to set up media literacy networks,** as media literacy policy is contingent on bringing together a wide range of stakeholders and coordinating their activity, ideally through such networks. Key players are identified as those who have wide public reach (libraries, broadcasters, museums).
- **Regulators should lead national coordination** and should also cooperate internationally; they should be given specific information-gathering powers to assess effective media literacy and counter-disinformation strategies by online platforms.
- **Evaluation criteria and processes are essential for the Commission to be able to allocate funding** for media literacy projects. The Commission is likely to start working on a uniform comparative methodology for reporting on media literacy under the AVMS Directive.
- **The newly created European Digital Media Observatory,** or a subset of this platform, will facilitate collaboration and the exchange of ideas and practices on media literacy (possibly including mapping of projects and research), alongside its primary purpose of sharing research on disinformation.
- **Platforms and media outlets will be expected to collaborate** to develop tools to improve the findability and visibility of quality news sources online.
- **Media literacy may play an important role in new EU legislative proposals**. The European Commission is working on a new Digital Services Act and Democracy Action Plan, which, among other things, will look at the need to tackle disinformation while protecting fundamental rights; this will mean relying heavily on platforms' own media literacy and transparency measures. Proposals should be based on the findings of the EU regulators' group, ERGA, on the voluntary

Disinformation Code (which also includes commitments to promote user empowerment, see below).

**EU Code on Disinformation: reports**

Two reports were published in late May, European Commission Report and EGRA Report,  assessing online platforms' compliance with a set of voluntary commitments to tackle disinformation. These include empowering users through media literacy tools and initiatives (under Pillar D).