Identifying and Verifying News through Social Media

University of Hamburg, 12 January 2015

Dr Neil Thurman
@neilthurman
Social media, personal communication, multi-platform content providers, but also increasingly networked sensors that provide a continuous, ever-growing data stream in real time. While intelligence (keyword Prism, tweens) and dominant Internet company Big Data technologies use extensive data collection, perform, even journalism with sustainable technologies must be equipped to the core journalistic tasks - such as recycling data, analyze and publish it, as comprehensive reporting - to secure and expand. This is of great technological, but not least, social relevance.

to the population to continue to supply reliable information and guidance. In addition, these journalistic more values decide how can the business models of media companies make in the future. This challenge arises the project “news stream 3.0”. 
Tools for Algorithmic news detection & verification

- How can they help journalists in their work?
- Might they threaten journalists’ jobs?
- How do they work?
- What biases might they have (and can we even find out)?
Chipps @chipps 12m
Tonight, my band is playing @thetradesclub in Hebden Bridge. Come along and have a fun night out. Free entry and great beer!

Greg May, PhD @greg_may 36s
What time? I can walk down from my new house.

Nick Bramhall retweeted
Roger H. @rogsha 3h
Today’s @xkcd should amuse both @bengoldacre and @GeorgeMonbiot

I see the problem. Your gut microbiome is out of balance. One moment.

I think you mean microbiome... right?

No here, swallow this: That’s a wolf. Do you need a glass of water?

BMC retweeted
TelegraphOutdoorShow 13h
Registration is live for @archclimbing @super_bloc Open! @thecornerpin @BMC_goodgirl

@UKClimbing @Team_BMC @UKClimbing 12h
Register to take part today

Register to take part today
Tories should call off search for anti-Ukip strategy - http://t.co/0vEupmOwzZ | via @FT

World business, finance, and political news from the Financial Times - FT.com

The latest UK and international business, finance, economic and political news.

Like · Comment · Share · @robertscole on Twitter
composition
unambiguity
reference
good
nations
threshold
news
bad
elite
magnitude
celebrity
continuity
unexpectedness
meaningfulness
frequency
follow
relevance
surprise
entertainment
people
follow
relevance
There's a plane in the Hudson. I'm on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy.
Suspect in custody. Officers sweeping the area. Stand by for further info.
Craig Jenner @craiglet - 16 Jan 2013
Helicopter just hit our building in vauxhall [link to Twitter photo]
• For stories mainstream media / newswires ignore
• To give editors heads-up on trends & sentiment
• To provide updates on a running story,
• To provide multimedia content & comment / contacts
• If Social Media breaks news faster than “newswires” (defined as Reuters, BBC, CNN, Google News, NYTimes, Guardian, Wired, The Register)
• If Social Media carries news not carried by newswires
• If newswires carry news not carried by Social Media
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Newswire</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Google Plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay legalizes cannabis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pope person of year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bubonic plague outbreak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Globe nominations named</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jang Sung-taek executed</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Google removes privacy feature</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Car bomb in Mali</td>
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<td>Peter O’Toole dies</td>
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<td>Chinese on moon</td>
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<td>Jameis Winston wins Heisman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Fontaine dies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google buys Boston Dynamics</td>
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<td>Michelle Bachelet elected</td>
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<td>RnR Hall of Fame inductions</td>
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<td>Santiago wins Miss World</td>
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<td>Two sentenced for drug smuggling</td>
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<td>Angela Merkel reelected</td>
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<td>Australia wins Ashes</td>
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<td>Gonzalo Inzunza Inzunza killed</td>
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<td>Pussy Riot given amnesty</td>
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<td>Ronnie Biggs dies</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target credit cards compromised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apollo Theatre ceiling collapses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Canada overturns prostitution laws</td>
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<td>Alan Turing pardoned</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Shinzo Abe visits Yasukuni shrine</td>
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<td>Joaquin Guzman heart attack</td>
<td></td>
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<td>MS King Seaways catches fire</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Where Twitter was first

Tech
Business
Entertainment
Politics
Disasters
Sport

Figure 2: Events categories where Twitter leads.

Only carried on Twitter

RIP Rick Rypien. Sad to see another death in the NHL. Too many tragedies in the world lately...
UFC on Versus 5 results: Jacob Volkman def. Danny Castillo via unanimous decision (29-28, 29-28, 29-28)
RT @NASA: NASA is ready to move forward with Space Launch System, a new capability for human exploration beyond Earth
Car reg NP05 LPU looting PC World Charlton. Retweet and shame.
RT @DerbysPolice: To reiterate rumours circulating there is disorder or looting in Derby city are untrue. Please RT. #derby #police

Table 3: Examples of events reported on Twitter, but not in our newswire data.

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London riots 2011

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Table 3: Examples of events reported on Twitter, but not in our newswire data.

Source: Broersma and Graham (2013)
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<table>
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<th>Publications</th>
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<tr>
<td>Broersma and Graham (2013)</td>
<td>8 UK &amp; Dutch Quality &amp; Tabloid Newspapers (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soo Jung Moon and Patrick Hadley (2014)</td>
<td>7 Elite US newspapers and TV stations (2010-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulussen and Harder (2014)</td>
<td>2 quality Flemish newspapers (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: Broersma and Graham (2013)
Twitter used as a primary source in articles where it is a source in elite US newspapers

Source: Soo Jung Moon and Patrick Hadley (2014)
How Social Media is used in Flemish newspaper stories

Source: Paulussen and Harder (2014)
Types of story using Tweets as source (%)

Source: Broersma and Graham (2013)
Types of story most likely to use social media as a source

Showbiz
Culture/arts
Sports
Human Interest
Politics

Source: Paulussen and Harder (2014)
Types of social media contributor quoted in UK & Dutch newspapers

Source: Broersma and Graham (2013)
Social Media in the mainstream media:

- Used relatively infrequently
- Often for illustration rather than to trigger news
- Often celebrities, sports stars & politicians quoted
• To spot (the few) high-magnitude stories that do break 1st on social media
• For stories mainstream media & newswires ignore (often sports & hyperlocal)
• To give editors heads-up on trends & sentiment
• To provide multimedia content & comment / contacts
• To provide updates on a running story
“the biggest problem is how to exploit the vast amount of content in social media with a small team” – **MSN journalist** (pers. Comm. Jan 2012)

“we need algorithms to take more onus off human being, to pick and understand the best elements” – **New York Times’ Social Media Team member** (pers. Comm. Jan 2012)

Growth in Tweets per day
Example list used to ‘seed’ NewsHound database

Lyse Doucet, Chief International Correspondent: @BBCLyseDoucet
Gavin Hewitt, Europe Editor: @BBCGavinHewitt
Lucy Williamson, Paris Correspondent: @LucyWilliamson
Fergal Keane, World Affairs Correspondent: @FergalKeane47
Chris Morris, Correspondent: @BBCChrisMorris
Christian Fraser, Correspondent: @ChristianFraser
Damian Grammaticas, Correspondent: @DNGBBC
Simon Wilson, Europe Bureau Editor: @Siwilso
Piers Schofield, Senior Europe Producer: @Inglesi
Natalie Morton, Senior Producer: @NatalieMortonTV
Imelda Flattery, Senior Producer: @ImeldaFlattery
Frank Gardner, Security Correspondent: @FrankRGardner
Gordon Corera, Security Correspondent: @GordonCorera
Being on the seed list

Each seed that follows them

Each seed they follow

Send at least 10 tweets per day

Verified with Twitter's blue tick

Presence on at least 50 Twitter lists

Scoring newshounds
<table>
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<th>Corresponding story</th>
<th>Sample tweet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>liverpool gets ambushed kalou defence box mazy run before @chelseafc great shoot #cfcwembley #facup</td>
<td>Salomon Kalou has an effort at goal from outside the area which goes wide right of the goal. Shot by Frank Lampard missed to the left of goal.</td>
<td>@chelseafc: Great mazy run by Kalou into the box but he gets ambushed by the Liverpool defence before he can shoot #CFCWembley #FAcupFinal (SL)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>mikel yellow card</td>
<td>Booking The referee shows Mikel a yellow card. Direct free kick taken by Daniel Agger.</td>
<td>@chelseaindo: 37mins Chelsea still lead 1-0. And yellow Card for Mikel</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>half time wembley chelsea lead liver-pool final cup 1-0 through goal ramires early #fcl</td>
<td>Half time.</td>
<td>@premierleague: It's half-time in the FA Cup final at Wembley and Chelsea lead Liverpool 1-0 through an early goal from Ramires. #fcl #fcl #facupfinal</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>over line saved super cech claiming went @chelseafc carroll header liver-pool #cfcwembley #facupfinal sl</td>
<td>Liverpool nearly score Andy Carroll takes a shot. Petr Cech makes a fantastic save.</td>
<td>@chelseafc: Carroll header is saved on the line by super Cech but Liverpool claiming it went over. #CFCWembley #FAcupFinal (SL)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>goal #cfcwembley #facupfinal sl @chelseafc chelsea</td>
<td>Didier Drogba scores.</td>
<td>@chelseafc: Chelsea goal #CFCWembley #FAcupFinal (SL).</td>
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Dispersion of news on social media
Trending in social media

Filtered by the last 1 day based on US Trends

Trending topics

Cameron: Fox News commentator was an idiot

Ukraine bonds sink again as Russia claims Crimea

Human rights: weapons exports and extreme floggings for "insulting Islam"
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Alternative News Values

• ....political, structural and natural root causes and contexts
• the accounts of the people involved rather than third interpretations by a third party....

Source: NGO-EC Liaison Committee, 1989
Verification
Mind Blowing
@TheMindBlowing

A shark was photographed swimming in the front yard of a flooded home in Brigantine Beach, New Jersey #sandy pic:


8,117 RETWEETS 1,338 FAVORITES
McDonalds in Virginia Beach flooded.

4:22 AM - 29 Oct 2012

1,091 RETWEETS 126 FAVORITES
Breaking: Two Explosions in the White House and Barack Obama is injured

Democratic Sen. Baucus, Finance committee chairman, says he won't run for re-election: apne.ws/10bIOFf -CJ
Syria massacre in Houla condemned as outrage grows

This image - which cannot be independently verified - is believed to show the bodies of children in Houla awaiting burial
Ex-NSA chief shot dead at LAX, Los Angeles Police say

REUTERS AND ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Globe and Mail
Published Friday, Nov. 01 2013, 1:11 PM EDT
Last updated Friday, Nov. 01 2013, 1:42 PM EDT

LAPD is reporting Ex-NSA chief Michael Hayden has been shot dead at LAX. Radical Christian group has claimed responsibility on its website.

Earlier, the Los Angeles International Airport said on Friday that police were responding to an incident at the airport and California media reported that a gunman with a high powered rifle was shot by law enforcement.

The airport said on social media that there was ”an incident underway at LAX.” A local CBS affiliate reported that a gunman had been shot and secured by law enforcement, and that some passengers were being evacuated from a terminal.

Witness Brian Keach said he heard ”about a dozen gunshots” from inside the security gate at Terminal 3.

Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman Brian Humphrey said emergency crews have responded to a multi-patient incident.

The incident was reported after 9:30 a.m.
of the most viral content on Twitter, during the Boston crisis were rumors and fake content”

(Gupta, Lamba, and Kumaraguru, 2013).
“>31,000 new Twitter accounts created during Boston blast tragedy … 19% were deleted or suspended by Twitter 2 months later”

(Gupta, Lamba, and Kumaraguru, 2013).
A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage

Authored by leading journalists from the BBC, Storyful, ABC, Digital First Media and other verification experts, the Verification Handbook is a groundbreaking new resource for journalists and aid providers. It provides the tools, techniques and step-by-step guidelines for how to deal with user-generated content (UGC) during emergencies.

Read the book  Buy the book

Or directly download the PDF, ePub or Kindle version. Available in Portuguese (PDF, ePub or Kindle) Now also available in Arabic! (العربية)
Principles for social media verification

• Content
• Contributor
• Context
Pretty sure someone just let off a round bullets in eaton center mall .. Wow just sprinted out of the mall ... Through traffic ...
People sprinting up the stairs right from where we just were ... Wow wow wow

RETWEETS  FAVORITES
251     42

3:25 PM - 2 Jun 2012
Contributor

I will make all Libyans “tree hugging hippies”
EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE
ON 24th AUGUST 2014

M6.6 Earthquake
Near Valparaiso

Map data ©2014 Google, Ineo/Geodatamap SRL, Mondly
Tweets per min

Bostom Marathon Bombings 2013

US tornadoes 2010
Barack Obama (@BarackObama)

This happened because of you. Thank you.
Potential modalities for ‘content’

- **Reputation:**
  - Links to reputable sites
  - High click through rate?

- **Provenance:**
  - Where did linked content originate from?
  - Freshness?

- **Popularity:**
  - Retweets

- **Influence:**
  - Discussions

- **Originality**

- **Authenticity:**
  - Changed / tampered with?

- **Objectivity and Diversity**
Wow... the missing kid Sunil Tripathi sure does look like suspect #2...
Harriet Harman  @HarrietHarman

MP Camberwell and Pockham, Labour deputy leader, shadow culture secretary
Influential on: [UKraine, ALSiceBucketChallenge, ferguson, 1063mobileradio, BreakingNews]
Location: Camberwell & Peckham, London

Truthmeter details

Breakdown
History 9
Information about how active a given source is on different social media platforms, also combining it with validity information (when did this source appear, how frequently has it been posting)

Popularity 5
Information about how many and what kind of people are following the activity of this source, and how many are reading or are recommending this activity to others

Influence 5
Information about how much this source triggers activities, such as re-posts, discussions, or comments. Are things happening because of what this source is posting?

Truthmeter rating
Overall 5
This is an overall rating taking into account all the information extracted from the history, popularity and influence attributes, giving an overview of the trustworthiness of the contributor

Contributor's details
Twitter  www.twitter.com/HarrietHarman

Contributor's network
Tweets  5369
Followers  59690
Following  1275

Latest Tweets

Harriet Harman  @HarrietHarman  12h
Congrats Duncan Campbell 2014 #TurnerPrize winner @Tate

Harriet Harman  @HarrietHarman  17h
@UKLabour Gordon Brown – A political giant of his generation
http://t.co/sKva131kDQ
## Computing Contributor Credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Tweets</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of followers</td>
<td>POPULARITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of follows</td>
<td>POPULARITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Human vs. algorithmic evaluation of social media contributors
Gordon Corera
@gordoncorera

BBC Security Correspondent - views expressed are my own not those of the BBC. author of MI6: Life and Death in the British Secret Service

Joined January 2011

6 Photos and videos

Tweets

554

FOLLOWING
408

FOLLOWERS
3,195

FAVORITES
1

LISTS
2

Tweets

Gordon Corera @gordoncorera · 10h
No classified material posted and no compromise of #CENTCOM severs in act of 'cybervandalism' US military says

_tweets

té 2

★

Gordon Corera @gordoncorera · 14h
Hope whoever ran those @centcom accounts had a good password and it wasn't something like 'CENTCOM'

_tweets

té 7

★ 3
## Calibration of verification metrics

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Tweets</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of followers</td>
<td>POPULARITY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio followers: followings</td>
<td>POPULARITY</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>INFLUENCE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verified?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popularity</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you!
@neilthurman