

HOW TO REVITALISE TRUST IN MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY - A US PERSPECTIVE

The Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy organized by the Aspen Institute in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation published a report that re-visions news media that will be fair, truthful and responsible, and to catalyze citizens to participate in civic life.

The Knight Commission recommends specific actions to restore trust in media and democracy. It identifies what journalists can do; what the media distributors such as social media and other digital networks can do; what government and business leaders can do; and, perhaps most important, what each American can and should do to assume responsibility for democratic governance.



Journalism

1. Practice radical transparency. The media should develop standards on how to disclose the ways they collect, report and disseminate the news. The best standards and practices that promote transparency include: labeling news, opinion and fact-based commentary; best practices on corrections, fact-checking, anonymous sources and tracking disinformation; and avoiding advertising formats that blur the line between content and commerce. There should also be developed strategies to better engage with the public and reflect the interests of their communities.

2. Expand financial support for news. The Knight Commission focuses on the development of new nonprofit models to achieve sustainability and to serve journalistic missions. It calls for the creation of one or more national venture- philanthropy entities dedicated to funding new and existing nonprofit organizations across the country.

3. Use technology to combat disinformation. To remain relevant, the media must learn to use advanced technology in all aspects of their businesses. In particular, the Commission urges media and technology companies to improve technologies to determine and then address disinformation. The media should also expose their audiences to diverse viewpoints, understanding the tendency of new media environments to create and amplify “filter bubbles” in which

people tend to view only material that already supports their opinions.

4. Diversify news organizations. News organizations should adopt recruitment, hiring and retention practices that increase diversity of staff, and even of owners.

Technology

5. Online services must take responsibility for protecting their users. To complement privacy legislation and enforcement, the Knight Commission supports proposals that technology companies and online services become “information fiduciaries.” As fiduciaries they must act in a trustworthy manner by ensuring security of user data, keeping it confidential and not using it for their own benefit in ways that compromise the interests of the user.

6. Online services should track and disclose sources of information. Online platforms should develop technology and standards to disclose to their users where the information they see comes from—identifying the author and publisher of articles, for example. In addition, the Knight Commission encourages the development of an automated tracking system that would enable analysis on the original source of a story, as well as how it spread to the public. The Knight Commission also recommends that the sponsors of all digital advertising be clearly identified.

7. Empower people to make technology work for them. The Knight Commission recommends that researchers develop ways to measure healthy dialogue online. These include creating metrics to help analyze balanced, democratic discourse. It recommends that internet platforms provide people with information about how algorithms work that determine which information they see, as well as opportunities to customize them. It also recommends enabling people to move their data from one social network to another. It proposes a multi-stakeholder forum for technology, journalism and consumer interests to work out solutions to a variety of issues that arise in this space.



Compiled by SCM (2019) from The Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy "The Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy", 2019