Contextomies, Confirmation Bias and the Filter Bubble: A triple threat to democracy

Peter Adams
SVP for Educational Programs
The News Literacy Project
October 17, 2014
Contextomies, Confirmation Bias and the Filter Bubble:  
A triple threat to democracy

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News Literacy
News Literacy

The critical thinking skills to be able to consume and create credible information across all media and all platforms as students, consumers and citizens.
84% of young adult respondents say they are bombarded with information “and would benefit from learning more about how to gauge what news is trustworthy.”

-Cathy J. Cohen, Joseph Kahne, 2012
News Literacy

The critical thinking skills to be able to consume and create credible information across all media and all platforms as students, consumers and citizens.
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News Literacy

Credible Information?
News Literacy

Credible Information?

Documentation
News Literacy

Credible Information?

Documentation

Transparency

Sourcing
News Literacy

Credible Information?

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Fairness
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Independence

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Pursuit of neutrality/objectivity

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What are my biases?

Independence

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Enough information?
News Literacy

Credible Information?

- Documentation
- Created by?
- Sourcing
- Purpose?
- Fairness
- Transparency
- What are my biases?
- Independence
- Pursuit of neutrality/objectivity
- Enough information?
Contextomy
'Contextomy' refers to the selective excerpting of words from their original linguistic context in a way that distorts the source’s intended meaning, a practice commonly referred to as ‘quoting out of context’. Contextomy is employed in contemporary mass media to promote products, defame public figures and misappropriate rhetoric. A contextomized quotation not only prompts audiences to form a false impression of the source’s intentions, but can contaminate subsequent interpretation of the quote when it is restored to its original context.

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“You’ve heard about the controversies, the process about the bill...but I don’t know if you’ve heard that it is legislation for the future – not just about health care for America, but about a healthier America. But we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it – away from the fog of the controversy.”

-Nancy Pelosi
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-Nancy Pelosi
“I want individuals to have their own insurance. That means the insurance company will have an incentive to keep you healthy. It also means if you don’t like what they do, you can fire them. I like being able to fire people who provide services to me. You know, if someone doesn’t give me a good service that I need, I want to say I’m going to go get someone else to provide that service to me.”

-Mitt Romney
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The annual MLK observance at the state house in Columbia SC had an interesting twist this year. The event is held on the north side steps of the statehouse. Prominent at that location is a large bronze statue of George Washington. This year, the NAACP constructed a "box" to conceal the Father of His Country from view so that participants would not be offended by his presence.
Recently Michelle Obama went to serve food to the homeless at a government funded soup kitchen.

Cost of a bowl of soup at homeless shelter: $0.00 dollars

Having Michelle Obama Serve you your soup: $0.00 dollars

Snapping a picture of a homeless person who is receiving a government funded meal while taking a picture of the first lady using his $500 Black Berry cell phone and $100.00 per month cellular service: Priceless
Malaysian Airlines #370?
Nope.

US Airways #1549 (1-15-09)
This apparently is how the Dutch PM arrived to meet Obama today.

7:44 PM - 25 Mar 2014

2,025 RETWEETS 1,188 FAVORITES
FW: Michigan Food Stamps
FW: Michigan Food Stamps

Fw: MI FOOD STAMPS

Doesn’t this give you a warm fuzzy knowing those who have to solicit governmental assistance are able to eat well this weekend???

Found in a parking lot of a grocery store, Menominee, Michigan

Subject: Fw: Life is tough for the poor.....

Found in a parking lot of a grocery store Menominee, Michigan

Need I say more about Government Giveaway Abuse?
Subject: You’ve Gotta Be Kidding Me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Medical Excise Tax on Retail Receipts

This is an image of a sales receipt from Cabela's, a popular sporting goods store.
Subject: You’ve Gotta Be Kidding Me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
The 2.3% Medical Excise Tax that began on January 1st is supposed to be "hidden" from the consumer, but it's been brought to the public's attention by hunting and fishing store Cabela's who have refused to hide it and are showing it as a separate line item tax on their receipts, the email states.

I did some research and found directly from the IRS's website information that PROVES this to be true and an accurate portrayal of something hidden in Obamacare that I was not aware of!

Now being sceptical of this I went to the IRS website and found this!
Q1. What is the medical device excise tax?

A1. Section 4191 of the Internal Revenue Code imposes an excise tax on the sale of certain medical devices by the manufacturer or importer of the device.

Q2. When does the tax go into effect?


Q3. How much is the tax?
A3. The tax is 2.3 percent of the sale price of the taxable medical device. See Chapter 5 of IRS Publication 510, Excise Taxes, and Notice 2012-77 for additional information on the determination of sale price.


So being more curious I clicked on "Chapter 5 of IRS Publication 510."

And what do I find under "MEDICAL DEVICES" under "MANUFACTURERS TAXES"?

The following discussion of manufacturers taxes applies to the tax on:
You’ve Gotta Be Kidding Me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sport fishing equipment;
Fishing rods and fishing poles;
Electric outboard motors;
Fishing tackle boxes;
Bows, quivers, broadheads, and points;
Arrow shafts;
Coal;
Taxable tires;
You’ve Gotta Be Kidding Me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Gas guzzler automobiles; and

Vaccines.

IRS.gov

I think we have definitely been fooled, if we believe that the Affordable Care Act is all about health care. It truly does appear to be nothing more than a bill laden with a whole lot of taxes that we the people have yet to be aware of.
Please pass this on. I am still incredulous that this can go on. Where is our press? I guess it's just like Nancy Pelosi said.......We have to pass it to see what is in it. What is next? What else is there we do not know about? I am sick to death about our government......all of them!!!!!!

God help us.
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God help us.
You’ve Gotta Be Kidding Me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Real
From: John [mailto:John1@fuse.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 20, 2011 4:20 PM
To: jamest@skynet.com
Subject: Warning - New gang tactics - Please read

Subject: Warning - New gang tactics - Please read

A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF MI

SITUATION...
While driving on a rural end of the roadway on Thursday morning, I saw
an infant car seat on the side of the road with a blanket draped over it.
For whatever reason, I did not stop, even though I had all kinds of
thoughts running through my head. But when I got to my destination, I
called the Canton PD and they were going to check it out. But, this is
what the Police advised even before they went out there to check....

"There are several things to be aware of ... gangs and thieves are now
plotting different ways to get a person (mostly women) to stop their
vehicle and get out of the car."
Fake iOS7 Updates

Update to iOS 7 and become waterproof.

In an emergency, a smart-switch will shut off the phone’s power supply and corresponding components to prevent any damage to your iPhone's delicate circuitry.
Fake iOS7 Updates

iOS 7 waterproofs your iPhone

With the new features and smart formalities of iOS 7, the phone can now detect sudden changes in thermodistribution with the touch sensitive screen and the home button.

This utilizes emergency shut off of the phone’s power supply and corresponding components to prevent any damage dealt to the delicate circuitry.

Update to iOS 7 and become waterproof.

In emergency, a smart-switch will shut off the phone’s power supply and corresponding components to prevent any damage to your phone's delicate circuitry.
Fake iOS7 Updates

iOS 7 utilizes the iPhone's features to provide additional protection during times of accidents. With the new features and smart formalities of iOS 7, the iPhone can now detect sudden changes in thermo distribution with the touch sensitive screen and the home button.

This uses emergency shut off of the phone's power supply and corresponding components to prevent any damage dealt to the delicate circuitry.
Diane in 7A

**elan gale** @theyearofelan  ·  Nov 28
She's pushing her call button a lot
Expand

---

**elan gale** @theyearofelan  ·  Nov 28
The male flight attendant is giving me the "let's just pretend this never happened" face. Shaking his head a lot
Expand

---

**elan gale** @theyearofelan  ·  Nov 28
He gave me two little bottles of vodka but he won't hand them to her. He says I have to do it myself
Expand
Dear "Elan"

The wine wasn't funny.
The vodka wasn't funny.
You're an awful person
with no compassion.

I'm sorry for your family that they
should have to
deal with you.

-Diane
Dear Christine:

I'm disappointed in you as a daughter. You're caret that we have a "shame in the family," but mistaken about what it is.

Kicking Chad out of your home simply because he did you he was gay is the real "abomination" here. Parent disowning her child is what goes "against nature."

The only intelligent thing I heard you saying in all this was that "you didn't raise your son to be gay." Of course you didn't. He was born this way and didn't choose it any more than he being left-handed. You however, made a choice of being hurtful, narrow-minded and narrow-hearted.

So, while we are in the business of I think I'll take this I now have a
Dayna Morales, Cannot Tip
Online donations pour in for waitress who was refused a tip because she's gay

By Kristina Sgueglia, CNN
updated 11:35 AM EST, Sat November 16, 2013
Dayna Morales, Cannot Tip
Ferguson

I'm sure young Michael Brown is innocent and just misunderstood. I'm sure he is a pillar of the Ferguson community.
Let’s all congratulate Governor Nixon on his great choice to reestablish civilization in Ferguson. Who could have guessed that it would fail, and he would have to resort to the National Guard?

Ferguson
Ferguson

Marc Catron
Thu · Kansas City
I'm sure young Micheal was misunderstood. I'm sure Ferguson community.

Via The Last Refuge, here is Ron Johnson flashing gang signs with one of his homeboys:

False
George Zimmerman 'Arrested While Visiting Ferguson' Article Not Real

An article saying George Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch volunteer who was acquitted of murdering black teenager Trayvon Martin last year, was arrested while in Ferguson is fake. The article was published on National Report, a satirical website.

JACK PHILLIPS
Ferguson

F

Real
Contextomy
Lie Detector Challenge

October 2014 Challenge

Click on the link below to read the article. When you're done with your research, you can document your findings in the form below.

Local Man in Coma After Eating 413 Red Lobster Biscuits

LOCAL MAN IN COMA AFTER EATING 413 RED LOBSTER BISCUITS

The NLP Lie Detector Challenge is a monthly contest for participating...
Photo Fact-Checking in the Digital Age

Mary Owen, NLP's Chicago program manager, explains why digital photos posted on social media and elsewhere online need to be checked, and shares some easy-to-use tips and tools for verifying them.
What was fake on the Internet this week: hippos in the Chicago River and pregnant ladies in bars

By Caitlin Dewey  October 3  Follow @caitlindewey

A screenshot from "Gestation's" very classy Facebook page. (Facebook)

There is so much fake stuff on the Internet in any given week that we've
Forward or Delete: This Week's Fake Viral Photos

Alex Jones, Tea Party Sites Freak Out Over "Strap-On Sex Ed" Hoax

Bigots Slam Obama for Imaginary "Muslim Awareness Month"

This MRI Sex Tape Is Totally Real and Pretty Gross

Neo-Nazis Fall for The Onion's Psychic Adam Sandler Story

---

**Antiviral**

Forward or Delete: This Week's Fake Viral Photos

Hudson Hongo and 84 others

Occasionally, against all odds, you'll see an interesting or even enjoyable picture on the Internet. But is it worth sharing, or just another Photoshop job that belongs in the digital trash heap? Check in here and find out if that viral photo deserves an enthusiastic "forward" or a pitiless "delete."

10/14 4:30pm

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Forward or Delete: This Week's Fake Viral Photos

Hudson Hongo and 41 others

Occasionally, against all odds, you'll see an interesting or even enjoyable picture on the Internet. But is it worth sharing, or just another Photoshop job that belongs in the digital trash heap? Check in here and find out if that viral photo deserves an enthusiastic "forward" or a pitiless "delete."

10/03 4:00pm

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CBS Station Spreads Cruel "Pumpkin Spice Four Loko" Hoax

Hudson Hongo and 69 others

Gawker readers of a certain age may fondly remember Four Loko*, the once popular malt liquor energy drink framed as a public menace and...
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias

Google search results for "sprint support" showing suggestions like "sprint support sucks"."
Confirmation Bias
Welcome to the SprintPCS-sucks.com Web site. The SprintPCS-sucks.com Web site is a consumer advocacy web site. If you have arrived at this site it is probably because you are not satisfied with your Sprint PCS cellular telephone service, either past or present. Read My Story to get the background on this ongoing saga.

The latest post in the Blog was made on 1/17/2013 7:15:58 PM.

Apparently it is okay for Sprint PCS to cancel your contract if they feel that you call them too much to complain about their cell service, billing errors, etc. At least they are nice enough that they will not charge you and early termination fee when they cancel your contract.

Read the full story...

See an image of an actual letter from SprintPCS
Confirmation Bias

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2005

There's a hundred stories in the naked city...

About Sprint. Here's another!

Reprinted Without Permission From "Signal Vs. Noise" blog

I kept my number and switched over from SprintPCS on August 23rd to Cingular. Ever since the switch, I can't get phone calls from people on SprintPCS outside of the 312 or 773 area code. Every time they call they get "This number or code you dialed is incorrect."

I can get phone calls from everyone on Earth except for people using SprintPCS. No problem with Verizon, no problem with T-Mobile, no problem with Cingular, no problem with US Cellular, no problem with any land-lines, but I can't get calls from SprintPCS customers.

You call Sprint, one person, talking multiple people,
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias

Google search results for "at&t support" with suggestions including "at&t sticks," "at&t suspend service," and "at&t subpoena."
Confirmation Bias

AT&T SUCKS!!! - AT&T Community Support
forums.att.com › Account and Billing › General Care and Support
Mar 10, 2012 – I am so disappointed I want to change service. I saw a commercial that said AT&T was the worse in customer satisfaction and didn't know that it w.

ATT SUCKS!!! Jan 2, 2013
ATT sucks! Apr 28, 2012
att sucks Mar 8, 2012
ATT sucks!! Mar 5, 2012
More results from forums.att.com »

AT&T Sucks More Than Any Other Carrier, Says Consumer Reports
gizmodo.com/.../att-sucks-more-than-any-other-carrier-provider-says...
Dec 6, 2011 – Once again, AT&T has been declared the worst carrier provider by the users themselves. This year Consumer Reports' satisfaction ...

AT&T Sucks | Facebook
www.facebook.com/pages/ATT-Sucks/230369933846024
December · November · October · September · August · July · June · May. AT&T Sucks is on Facebook. To connect with AT&T Sucks, sign up for Facebook today.

8 Reasons Why AT&T Sucks Beyond All Belief | Who Sucks
www.who-sucks.com › Business
Jun 29, 2007 – AT&T Inc. is the largest provider of local and long distance telephone service, wireless service, DSL internet access, and zoo animal torture.

AT&T Sucks (ATTsucks) on Twitter
https://twitter.com/ATTsucks
Loosely hронicing the AT&T sucks tweets. Note: I don't think AT&T sucks. ... RT @bansii824: t mobile sucks and so does sprint and att is airtite but VERIZON IS ...

AT&T sucks - CBSSports.com Message Boards
www.cbssports.com/mcc/messages/message/40111987
Nov 27, 2012 – I cannot say a single good thing about AT&T. I had to sign up with that reeking turd of a company, because, at the time, they were the only ...

Why Do People Hate Att? 86% People Do (70,075 opinions)
amplicate.com/hate/att
Everybody sucks! +0. I HATE ALL CELL PHONE COMPANIES! AT&T's service is all around shit, Verizon is too over priced, Sprint barely has a signal ...
Confirmation Bias

VERIZON SUCKS | Facebook
www.facebook.com/pages/VERIZON-SUCKS/199406682315
VERIZON SUCKS. 8631 likes - 28 talking about this.

Verizon Sucks
verizonsucksass.com/
A malcontent customer's ravings about the evil corporation known as Verizon and its demonic spawn, Super Media, formerly known as Idearc Media.
The product that the Verizon ... - Verizon Directory Sucks - The 8830 World Edition ...

Verizon Sucks!
verizonsucks.us/

Verizon sucks! - Android Forums at AndroidCentral.com
forums.androidcentral.com › ... › Verizon Galaxy Note 2
Dec 6, 2012 - Ok my question to you fine folks is this, if the note2 is a huge hit along the lines of the s3 do you think by the time the note3 and the s4 comes ...

New Verizon Data Plans Suck - Jun 20, 2011
verizon 3G speeds totally suck now!! - Feb 24, 2011
More results from forums.androidcentral.com »

Verizon Wireless - Verizon Sucks
verizon-wireless. pissedconsumer.com/verizon-sucks-20120213531...
Oct 21, 2012 - From: Plant City, Florida - I've been a customer for many years and have 2 phones on the account. The only solutions they offered was to reset...
Confirmation Bias

Google search results for "us cellular sucks" show negative reviews and complaints about US Cellular's service. The search results include links to Facebook pages and Yahoo! Answers where users express dissatisfaction with the service, often citing issues with phone pricing and availability within two-year contracts.
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation bias, as the term is typically used in the psychological literature, connotes the seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations, or a hypothesis in hand. The author reviews evidence of such a bias in a variety of guises and gives examples of its operation in several practical contexts. Possible explanations are considered, and the question of its utility or disutility is discussed.
Where am I leaning?

The Righteous Mind
Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion
Jonathan Haidt
Where am I leaning?

The Righteous Mind
Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion
Jonathan Haidt
Where am I leaning?

- Judge, then reason
Where am I leaning?

- Judge, then reason
- ↑ Education =
  ↑ Ability to rationalize
Where am I leaning?

- Judge, then reason
- ↑ Education = ↑ Ability to rationalize
- “well-informed and interested in accuracy”
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias
Confirmation Bias
Personalization

• Virtually everything we encounter is becoming personalized through algorithmic filtering.
Personalization

• Virtually everything we encounter is becoming personalized through algorithmic filtering
Personalization

- Virtually everything we encounter is becoming personalized through algorithmic filtering
“...the idea of a website that isn’t customized to a particular user will seem quaint.”

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO
“…personalization could easily have a hand not only in who goes on a date with whom but in where they go and what they talk about. The algorithms that orchestrate our ads are starting to orchestrate our lives.”
“Democracy requires a reliance on shared facts; instead, we’re being offered parallel but separate universes.”

- Eli Pariser
“a unique universe of information”
Epistemic closure
Why it Matters:

If we arrive at a day when all information is understood as equal—as a collection of perspectives from hopelessly biased and flawed contributors—we will have a society in which there are no closed questions—no established truths.
Why it Matters:

If we sacrifice the notion that at least some things are demonstrably true, on what common ground can we have meaningful civic discourse?
The Filter Bubble
The Filter Bubble

Google

Search for: Ebola

About 346,000,000 results (0.38 seconds)

In the news

**Ebola: Texas hospital employee quarantined in Belize**
CNN.com - 2 hours ago
Texas worker who may have handled Ebola samples quarantined in ... fluid samples – two days shy of the 21-day incubation period for Ebola.

$39643362 worth of NIH funding that could have gone to the Ebola vaccine
Fox News - 2 hours ago

**Ebola Nurse Amber Vinson Called Texas Health Officials Before Flight: Uncle**
ABC News - 1 hour ago

More news for **Ebola**

**WHO | Ebola virus disease**
www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/en/
World Health Organization
WHO fact sheet on Ebola haemorrhagic fever includes key facts, definition, transmission, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, WHO response.

**Ebola virus disease - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebola_virus_disease
Ebola virus disease (EVD), Ebola hemorrhagic fever (EHF) or simply Ebola is a disease of humans and other mammals caused by an ebolavirus. Signs and ...
But it’s not all bad...
But it’s not all bad...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISIS fighters were caught trying to enter the U.S. via the U.S.-Mexico border</td>
<td>70,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man in Frisco, Texas being examined for Ebola came into direct contact with Ebola victim Thomas E. Duncan</td>
<td>160,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child soldier with ISIS was killed in battle, making him youngest Islamic State fighter to die</td>
<td>10,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A historian discovered a text with an account of a miracle performed by Jesus</td>
<td>246,609</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergent.info

CONFIRMED FALSE

Claim: ISIS fighters were caught training in Jordan.
Originated: October 9th, 2014

FOR
1 source
288 shares

Top Source
Daily Mail - October 9th 2014
Texas deputy showing Ebola symptoms was sent into patient zero's...
288 shares

AGAINST
8 sources
96,074 shares

Top Source
WFAA - October 8th 2014
Could take 48 hours to confirm if deputy has Ebola
40,661 shares

OBSERVING
9 sources
47,089 shares

Top Source
MyFOXDFW.com - October 8th 2014
Dallas deputy being tested for Ebola
35,463 shares

CONFIRMED FALSE

Claim: A historian discovered a text with an account of a miracle performed by Jesus.
Originated: October 8th, 2014

10,166 shares

246,609 shares
Emergent.info

Shares Over Time

Claim: A historian discovered a text with an account of a miracle performed by Jesus
Originated: October 8th 2014

246,609 shares
Top 5 falsehoods about Ebola

The spread of Ebola in West Africa, and now into Dallas, has stoked plenty of misinformation about the Ebola virus, its origins and the government’s response. PolitiFact and PunditFact have been fact-checking claims about the Ebola ...

POLITIFACT.COM

The spread of Ebola in West Africa, and now into Dallas, has stoked plenty of misinformation about the Ebola virus, its origins and the government’s response. PolitiFact and PunditFact have been fact-checking claims about the Ebola outbreak since July. Here are our top five falsehoods.
PPP

Top 5 falsehoods about Ebola

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PolitiFact
October 15 at 2:10pm

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@PicPedant
@brownpau.
FactCheck.org
@factcheckdotorg
A nonpartisan, nonprofit “consume advocate” for voters.

Philadelphia
factcheck.org
Joined February 2009

PicPedant
@PicPedant
Punctilious internet killjoy at the forefront of the New Debunkonomy. Obsessed with attribution & Photoshop. Your pedant:
@brownpau.

google.com/searchbyimage
Committee to Protect Journalists
Non-Profit Organization

By now, you should be aware that journalists are among those most likely to face technical attempts at attack and interception. You've got sources and need to protect them, but you may not have any idea what you can do (easily). Tom Lowenthal, CPJ's Staff Technologist, addresses this in his latest blog entry.

#Surveillance #NSA

Simple steps to protect journalists and sources from eavesdroppers - Committee to Protect... cpj.org

Journalists are among those most likely to face technical
Algorithmic challenges
Discuss

What classroom and other learning experiences can we design for students to help combat these threats?

To allow them to identify misinformation, be aware of their confirmatory biases and (continuously) pop their filter bubble?
NLP Programs
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
- Digital program
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
- Digital program
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
- Digital program
- After school program
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
- Digital program
- After school program
- Professional development
NLP Programs

• Classroom program
• Digital program
• After school program
• Professional development
  o Four-part online PD series starting Nov. 12
NLP Programs

• Classroom program
• Digital program
• After school program
• Professional development
• Workshops with partner organizations
NLP Programs

- Classroom program
- Digital program
- After school program
- Professional development
- Workshops with partner organizations
- Content consulting
Q&A
Online PD Series

- November 12, 2014
- December 10, 2014
- January 14, 2015
- February 18, 2015

thenewsliteracyproject.org