NOTCHING UP THE NUKES

P9

INSIGHTS

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CHALLENGES TO JOURNALISM

Lessons to overcome them

EXPERT INSIGHTS

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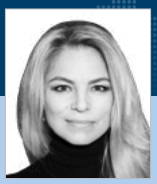
Editor-in-Chief, 'Russia &
America in XXI century'

MUST READ

THE SCIENCE OF REPORTING SCIENCE

Reporting about science in a disinformation pandemic is a challenge that needs to be urgently addressed



Dr Maria Nikitenova
is the Editor-in-chief of the science journal titled "Russia and U.S. in XXI century" and is Head of Division at the Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

One of the main issues regarding the dissemination of news on science is the level of knowledge about the subject. This is a crucial challenge for a highly technical topic or rigorously research material that is being published and often, there is a lack of understanding with regard to the depth of the matter. The only solution I believe, is education from good institutions that then creates a solid foundation for the individual to write or report on complex technical and scientific topics. There is also a need for self-education and constant updation of knowledge. This is essential as the scientific field plays an extraordinarily important role in our society and there needs to be a thorough understanding and investment in those who can write on scientific issues.

While dealing with a scientific subject, there are few pointers that can be followed by journalists or others who are reporting it. While the string of unfamiliar terms may seem daunting at the first glance, here's where maximum care needs to be taken. The abstract can be the best place to glean an outline about the topic and recognize the broader implications of the research. Perusing through it can help ease the reader in, especially when having to tackle the scientific jargons or acronyms. Both the introduction and conclusion are also vital in achieving a substantial level of comprehension regarding the issue.

While reporting, it is important to remember to not dilute the research by oversimplifying the scientific terms as it tends to change the portrayal of science. Similarly, the tone, while reporting any scientific issue, should not appear overly opinionated as it encourages the discussion of established scientific facts as it were mere opinions.

Additionally, the concept of 'pre-bunking' can be practised to inoculate readers against both misinformation and disinformation. Pre-bunking, research suggests, is proven to be more successful than debunking. As part of this process, readers are exposed to a weak dose of the means employed to propagate disinformation, which allows them to have a better idea of how they might be deceived. Pre-bunking is one of the psychological strategies adopted to battle the disinformation pandemic.

Few tips for communicating science can be double checking facts, making the fact appear more captivating by focusing on the human story of the issue, and credible by offering additional information. Techniques employed by disinformation super spreaders such as cherry-picking and logical fallacies can be pointed out to the reader. Finally, highlighting the rigour that undergirds any scientific consensus is vital for the readers' reaffirmation of the scientific community's credibility.

Expert Q&A

Q Dr Maria: What are the procedures and parameters for deciding on the cover page in news magazines?

A Bill Emmott: The value and importance of the cover page, particularly in the previous print-based era where it was inherently connected to the status of the publication as print. The cover image is the single most powerful way of conveying an idea, story or the analysis of an argument. The goal is to offer an impression to the reader, regarding the attitude of the publication, its point of view and the overall tone. This is best done through the cover.

While the chief onus lies with the Editor-in-chief, they are supported by an able group of staff, constituting of artists and interpreters. They are made part of the editorial discussion so that they understand the issue in every sense and produce proposals for how the cover's message can be conveyed.

However, in the digital world, the cover has a different value and status. The chief objective is to tempt people to opt to read the magazine, especially when the market is flooded with surplus information. While the reading modes have come to include tablet-style reading, the cover is still important, but in another way. It can have a distinct centrality and sense to it in the current age.