

Education Group Fights Misinformation Via Wiki

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Newspapers may have their own printing presses, but at a time when credibility of online information is increasingly questioned, it's important for hometown publications to have a Wikipedia page, too.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), in partnership with a Washington state college professor, is helping to fight misinformation and teach digital literacy through its [Digital Polarization Initiative](#) by having college students create or beef up Wikipedia pages for local newspapers. Organizations are not supposed to write about themselves on Wikipedia due to conflict-of-interest rules, so the initiative solves a problem for small papers that do not already have a Wikipedia page.

The idea, according to Washington State University Vancouver's Mike Caulfield, is to make accurate information about the newspapers easily available and to put a focus on neutral messaging.

"When you say 'the media' as this sort of noun, it's very easy to see this as something distant, run by shady people with their own agendas," Caulfield, the university's director of blended and networked learning, [told Poynter](#). "When you go through newspapers and their history, figure out how many staffers are in a local newsroom, it kind of deconstructs that noun 'the media' into something that's more composed of people who, for the most part, are trying to do the right thing."

Caulfield is working with AASCU to recruit students to work on the project. The program aims to create Wikipedia pages and infoboxes for 1,000 local newspapers by December 15, 2018. "If this goes well, we hope it can serve as a model for future projects for newspapers from other parts of the world, or [for] other topics," the [Wikipedia page states](#).

The Digital Polarization Initiative's [own wiki](#) houses student analyses of claims that have been made online, noting the original sources and reporting on their own research into the claims. The site "allows university students to investigate questions of truth and authority on the web and publish their results," according to the initiative. Questions explored on the site include whether basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal believes the Earth is flat, whether there is a hiring bias against women in the technology industry, and how many seats in Congress political parties lost when a president of their party was in office.

[In comments to Nieman Lab](#), Caulfield noted that the concept easily translates to a number of different subjects, allowing students in a variety of majors to improve their digital literacy. "It's an idea that fits well into a lot of different classes. You can drop it in a public policy class, you can drop it in a writing class," he said.

Source: <https://associationsnow.com/2018/07/education-group-fights-misinformation-wiki/>