

# GETTING IT RIGHT

Fact checking and verification  
of nontraditional sources

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*Presented at ACES 2016 conference, Portland, Ore.*



# Who do you trust?

Until you've verified it: No one.



**Gerri Berendzen**  
@gerrrib



Following

One of the takeaways from authors of CJR  
Rolling Stone report: Verify, verify, verify. [cjr.bz/1C892ut](http://cjr.bz/1C892ut)



...

RETWEETS

3

FAVORITES

3



10:28 PM - 5 Apr 2015

# Digital verification vs. traditional fact checking

- All verification begins with asking questions, no matter what the platform.  
Being a skeptical editor is a plus.
- Always ask:  
How do you know this?  
What is the source of this information?  
Is it too good to be true?



# Fact-checking maxims

- I. If you read something and a question immediately pops into your mind, don't ignore it.



# Fact-checking questions

1. If you read something and a question immediately pops into your mind, run with it. Don't ignore it.
2. If it seems too good to be true (or too big, etc.), it probably is. Question it.

# Fact-checking questions

1. If you read something and a question immediately pops into your mind, run with it. Don't ignore it.
2. If it seems too good to be true (or too big to be true or too unusual to be true), it probably is. Question it.
3. If something seems like a coincidence, check it.

# Is social media different?

You still need  
to develop  
old school  
human  
resources

You still need  
to contact  
people and  
question  
them

You still need  
to be  
skeptical

You still need  
to consult  
credible  
resources

... but you need to combine that with use of digital research tools

# Would you use this info (or retweet it)?

 **ColumbiaPD**  
@ColumbiaPD

Avoid Rock Quarry Road. 5 people trapped in burning car.

25 RETWEETS    0 FAVORITES

7:54 PM - 6 Apr 2015 - via Twitter · Embed this Tweet

 Reply  Delete  Favorite

# Would you use this info (or retweet it)?



ColumbiaPD

@ColumbiaPD



+ Follow

Bank Robbery 205 Keene Street, Boone  
County National Bank. PIO Maupin en-route.



RETWEETS

2

FAVORITES

2



12:36 PM - 3 Jan 2015



Reply to @ColumbiaPD

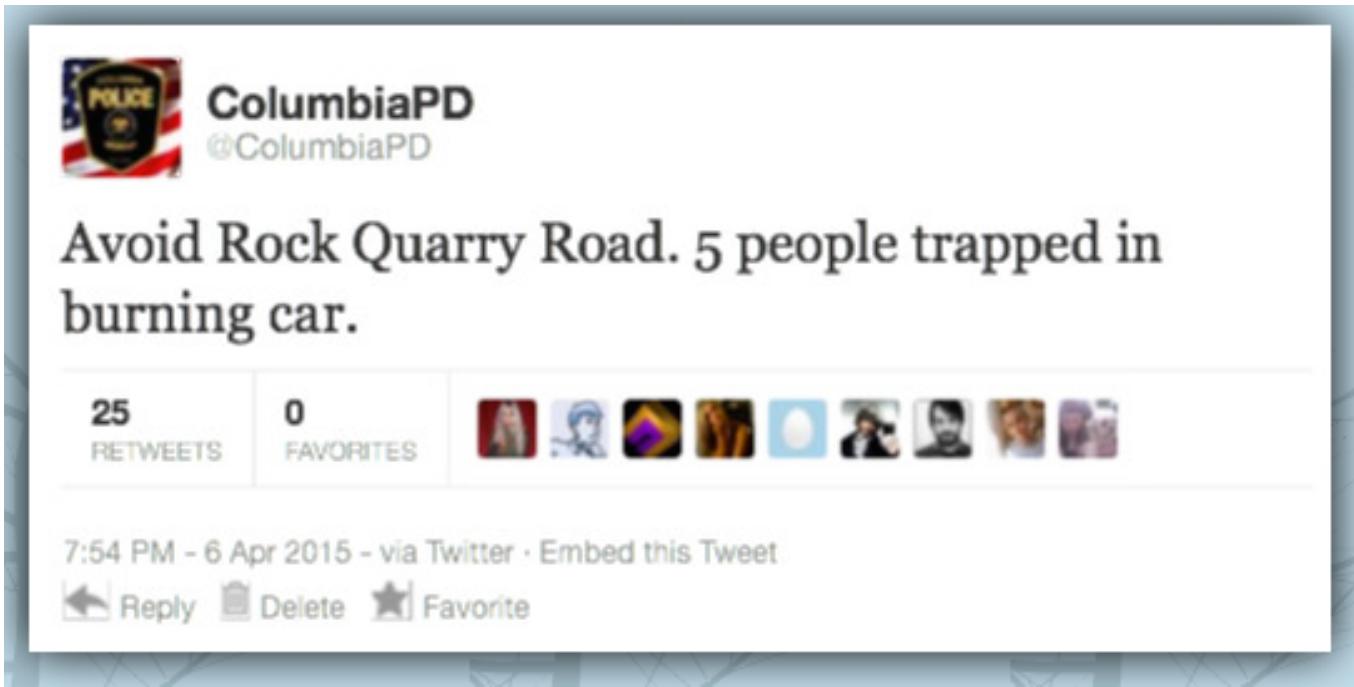


The Eagle 93.9 @TheEagle939 · Jan 3

RT @ColumbiaPD: Bank Robbery 205 Keene Street, Boone County National  
Bank. PIO Maupin en-route.



# The first one is a fake



A screenshot of a fake Twitter post from the account @ColumbiaPD. The tweet content is: "Avoid Rock Quarry Road. 5 people trapped in burning car." The post has 25 retweets and 0 favorites. The timestamp is 7:54 PM - 6 Apr 2015. Below the tweet are standard Twitter interaction buttons for reply, delete, and favorite.

**ColumbiaPD**  
@ColumbiaPD

Avoid Rock Quarry Road. 5 people trapped in burning car.

25 RETWEETS 0 FAVORITES

7:54 PM - 6 Apr 2015 - via Twitter · Embed this Tweet

Reply Delete Favorite

Tweet created using Lemmetweetthatforyou.com

# Creating fakes

- The Wall Machine lets people create fake Facebook posts and comments.
- Lemme Tweet That For You and Simulator.com let people create fake tweets.
- FakePhoneText and IOS7 Text lets people create fake images of iPhone conversations.

# Using social media

- Monitor social accounts and use them like you would any phoned in news tip.

Ask yourself, how do you decide whether to believe a news tip that is called into your newsroom?

When is social media like a photo of a mushroom  
(or a deer or an odd-shaped vegetables)?



# When can you let down your defenses?



dshin131

@Danny\_Shin131

OMG I JUST TALKED TO DREW  
LOCK I LOVE MIZZOU

6:32 PM - 05 Sep 2015



JACK HARRY

@JACKWHB

MU defense gives up only 3, but  
buzz is about Frosh QB Drew  
Lock. Maty Mauk should already  
be looking over his  
shoulder. That's good!

6:31 PM - 05 Sep 2015



Cade Carroll

@Cade12Carroll3

#zousocial



Tim Royers

@bugeatergames



The weather channel says 40% chance of rain and that it is  
currently partly cloudy...

5:15 PM - 1 Jun 2014

3



Advance PT  
@Advance\_PT



Congratulations #qndladyraiders! @FoleyCassidy @kmeyer18  
@Zangten

3:14 PM - 8 Mar 2014

2

kevin meyer  
@kmeyer18



What a legacy for @FoleyCassidy @krissygengen  
@marybeth2432 @hannahmarcolla @shebbers27 , Kennedy.  
Special Seniors who did it right.

2:49 PM - 8 Mar 2014

14

Tweets posted on columbiamissourian.com, left;  
omaha.com, center; and whig.com.

# Don't ignore normal news processes when you see things on social networks



Tarun Shukla

@shukla\_tarun



Follow

Flight canceled. This couldnt be pulled out today. [@AmericanAir](#). [#avgeek](#)



RETWEETS

3



5:40 PM - 4 Apr 2015

# Check the social media profile



Tweets 26.2K Following 282 Followers 6,353 Favorites 2,821 [Follow](#)

[Tweets](#) [Tweets & replies](#) [Photos & videos](#)

 Tarun Shukla @shukla\_tarun · 11m Ahem.. "@Omaha3131: @Heather\_Poole @shukla\_tarun @AmericanAir Pilot saw an Easter egg!" [View conversation](#)

 Tarun Shukla @shukla\_tarun · 20m Tilt in the ditch is quite visible. Thankfully no shute sliding experience. @AmericanAir @FAANews @icao youtu.be/qzr--xS9JBM #avgeek

 [Tweet to Tarun Shukla](#)

 1 Follower you know

 [YouTube](#)

# Check the social media profile

Profile summary X



A circular inset portrait of Alfred Friendly, a man with white hair and a warm smile.

TWEETS FOLLOWING FOLLOWERS

**925** **382** **396**

Follow

## Press Partners

@AlfredFriendly

The Alfred Friendly Press Partners, a non-profit, offers professional development opportunities for journalists & news outlets from developing countries.

Columbia, MO · [presspartners.org](http://presspartners.org)

# Verified accounts?

Screenshot of a TweetDeck interface showing a search for verified accounts.

The search results for "comissourian" (row 3) include:

- Matt Schuckman** (@SchuckWHIG) - Verified account  
Sports Editor for the Quincy Herald-Whig. Check out my blog at <http://whig.com/schuck>.  
Quincy, Ill. • <http://www.whig.com/sports>
- Geri Berendzen** (@gerrib)  
@jacobwe It's like farmers market.  
We're a society of copy editors, not a society that belongs to copy editors.
- Columbia MO Buzz** (@ColumbiaM...)  
Inmate gets maximum 15-year sentence in threats case. William

The search results for "#ACES2015" (row 4) include:

- Saul Garcia** (@herding\_ster)  
"herding\_ster" single most used #ACES2015. H Batman." @brian
- Karen Lewis T** (@printatters)  
Must... have... awesome new @ArrantPedant #iamediting pic.twitter.com
- Lori Burwash** (@EditorMania)  
It's an editor's from #aces2015-hand... via @EditorMania
- Taylor Carlier** (@Red)

Bottom right corner: Screen Shot 2015-08-06 28 PM

# Check the profile



**Quincy Fire** @QuincyFire · 26 Dec 2013

A tax levy would have prevented this. #scaretactics



1



1



# Check the profile

A profile picture showing a large, intense fire engulfing a wooden structure, possibly a house or a porch, against a dark background.

**Quincy Fire**  
@QuincyFire

TWEETS FOLLOWING FOLLOWERS  
**267** 7 90

[Tweets](#) [Tweets & replies](#) F

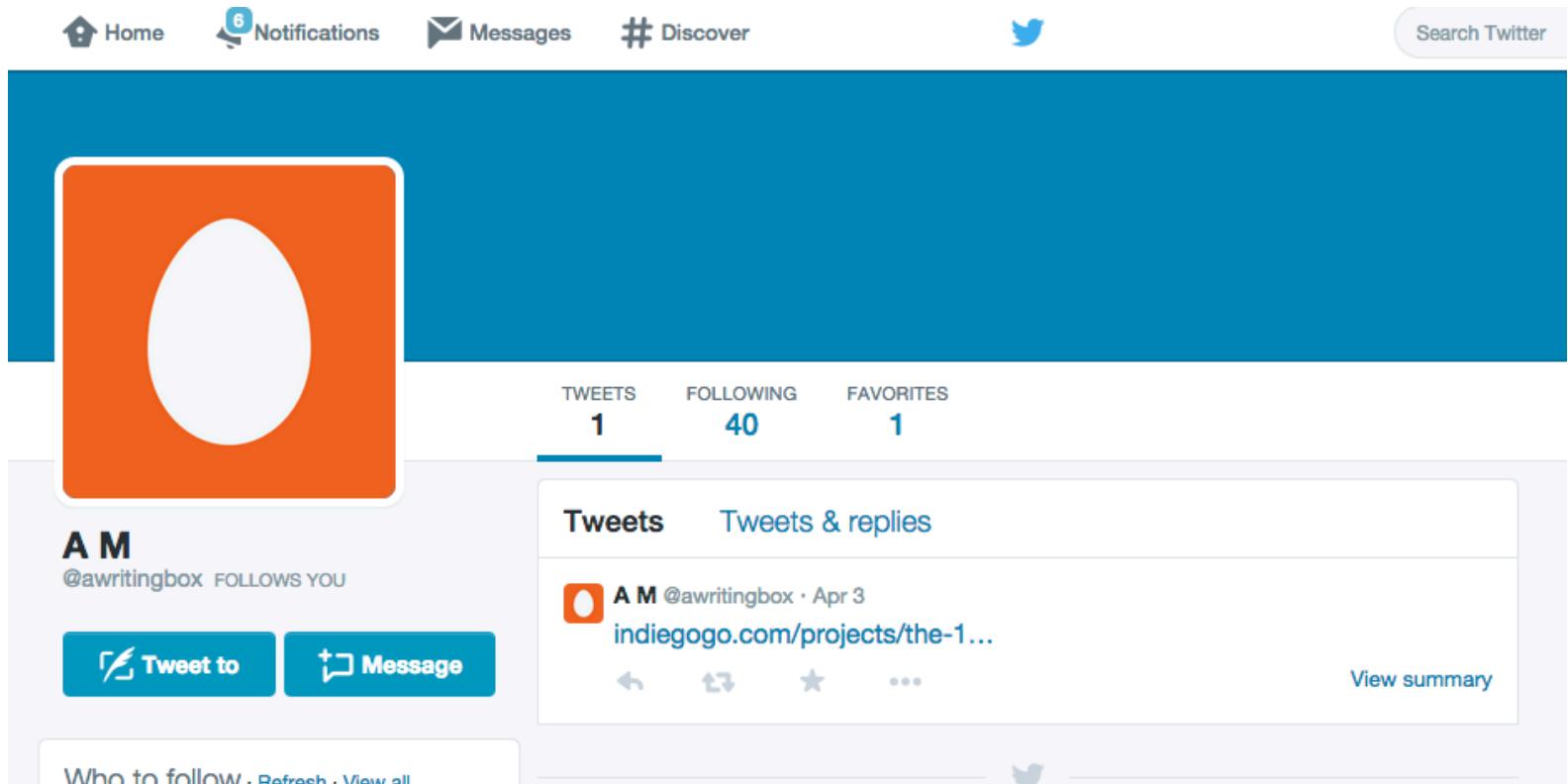
 **Quincy Fire** @QuincyFire · Mar 17

# Evaluating the account

Advice from Craig Silverman of Regret the Error, Poynter:

- Check when the account was created. (Be suspicious of new brands.)
- Analyze their network: Friends, followers, conversations and retweets.
- Evaluate tweets before and after.
- Use tools like Klout to check out social media use, or [geosocialfootprint.com](http://geosocialfootprint.com).

# Check the profile



The image shows a Twitter profile page for a user named AM (@awritingbox). The profile picture is a solid orange square with a white oval in the center. The user's name is displayed as "AM" and their handle as "@awritingbox". Below the handle, it says "FOLLOWS YOU". There are two buttons at the bottom left: "Tweet to" and "Message". At the top, there are navigation links: Home, Notifications (with 6 notifications), Messages, Discover, and a search bar. Below the header, there are summary statistics: TWEETS 1, FOLLOWING 40, and FAVORITES 1. A section titled "Tweets" shows one tweet from AM (@awritingbox) dated April 3, which links to "indiegogo.com/projects/the-1...". There are options to "View summary" and interact with the tweet (retweet, favorite, etc.). At the bottom, there is a suggestion for "Who to follow" and a refresh button.

Home Notifications 6 Messages Discover Search Twitter

A M  
@awritingbox FOLLOWS YOU

Tweet to Message

TWEETS 1 FOLLOWING 40 FAVORITES 1

Tweets Tweets & replies

A M @awritingbox · Apr 3  
[indiegogo.com/projects/the-1...](http://indiegogo.com/projects/the-1...)

View summary

Who to follow · Refresh · View all

# When in doubt?

- If it seems legit, but you are not sure about the information, be transparent.

Tell your audience what you don't know. (And credit the source.)

- If verification fails or seems iffy: Don't use the info; don't retweet or share.

# Checking user-generated photos and video

P.S.: this photo isn't real — it was Photoshopped.



"A shark swimming in the street in Puerto Rico after #HurricaneIrene hit."  
[pic.twitter.com/J7yDR4f](http://pic.twitter.com/J7yDR4f)



powered by  Photobucket

Flag this media

25 Aug via web ⭐ Favorite 🔄 Retweet ↗ Reply ⚡ Storyfy this

Retweeted by [MartijnKrook](#) and 100+ others



# Checking user-generated photos and video

P.S.: this photo is real —  
but it wasn't taken  
during Hurricane Sandy

JAMIE @jamster83

Follow

Amazing picture of hurricane #Sandy descending in New York

Reply Retweet Favorite More



RETWEETS 2,593 FAVORITES 558

11:51 AM - 29 Oct 2012

Flag media



# Photos & video: 5 steps to verification

- Determine the provenance

# Photos and video: 5 steps

- Determine the provenance
- Verify the source



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- Determine the provenance
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- Locate the original photo or video



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- Determine the provenance
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- Locate the original photo or video
- Verify the date

# Photos and video: 5 steps

- Determine the provenance
- Verify the source
- Locate the original photo or video
- Verify the date
- Study it — especially with video, look at it and see what it shows

*Source: Verification Handbook*



# Tips from Mandy Jenkins at Storyful

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- Look for street signs, storefronts and landmarks. Use Google Streetview or Panaramio to find the location.

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- Ask for other photos or videos the uploader has from before and after the image/video in question.
- Look for street signs, storefronts and landmarks. Use Google Streetview or Panaramio to find the location.
- Get to know the source. Look up their other social media accounts. Look them up in local phone directories, on Spokeo, Facebook, Pipl.com or LinkedIn.

# Beware of scrapers

Scrapers are people who will share photos and videos they didn't take and pass them off as their own.

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*From Jenkins:*

*“If a social account often shares content from many wildly different locations and always seems to have something potentially big around lots of different stories, they are likely scrapers.”*

# Digital tools

- Tineye.com
- Google reverse image search
- Fotoforensics.com
- Photoshop
- Wolfram Alpha
- Whois.net lookup
- AnyWho.com
- Pipl.com
- Spokeo.com

Google

Web Images News Shopping Maps More ▾ Search tools

About 523 results (1.25 seconds)



Image size:  
624 × 831

No other sizes of this image found.

Best guess for this image: **[fake viral](#)**

### [The Gallery of Fake Viral Images - The Museum of Hoaxes](#) [hoaxes.org/photo\\_database/viral\\_images](#) ▾

Reality: The photo was actually taken in Vietnam by photographer Na Son Nguyen in October 2007. Despite the many tales that have been woven about the two ...

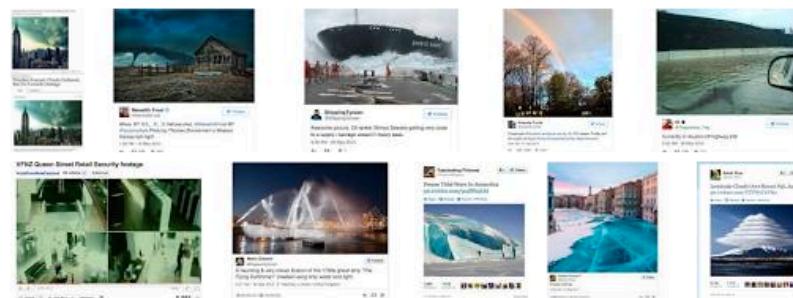
### [7 Fake Viral Photos You Probably Thought Were Real ...](#)

[www.cracked.com](#) › News ▾

Jun 30, 2015 - The problem is, there's often a sharp disconnect between what can fit into a viral Facebook photo and that irritating killjoy known as "the truth."

### [Visually similar images](#)

[Report images](#)



# Fotoforensics.com

FotoForensics - Analysis

[fotoforensics.com/analysis.php?id=8255b99dac2592f608d507e8efe94570d9c652b2.56041](http://fotoforensics.com/analysis.php?id=8255b99dac2592f608d507e8efe94570d9c652b2.56041)

Most Visited | Multiqueue | Colum... | Outlook Web App | Columbia Missourian | Inbox - gl.berendzen... | Facebook | ACES | ACES — WordPress | Dropbox - Sign in

**Analysis:**

- Digest
- ELA
- JPEG %
- Metadata
- Original

A photograph of the rear half of an American Airlines regional jet, likely a Bombardier CRJ, parked on a tarmac. The aircraft's tail number, N15051E, is visible on the fuselage. The word "American" is partially visible on the side of the plane.

<b>Filename:</b>	CByB78MWgAArnWa.jpg:orig
<b>Timestamp:</b>	2015-04-04 22:37:18 GMT
<b>File Type:</b>	image/jpeg
<b>Dimensions:</b>	1052x780
<b>Color Channels:</b>	3
<b>File Size:</b>	56,041 bytes
<b>MD5:</b>	e725159cf8277f8bd036ff169a22cbf9

# Would you question this photo?

fotoforensics.com/analysis.php?id=04b14f5cd62669197eb6aaa9031a12edfbfd8cac.66605

| C |  american heritage | | | |

Most Visited | Outlook Web App | Columbia Missourian | Inbox - gl.berendz... | Facebook | ACES | ACES - WordPress | Dropbox - Sign in | myHR | Human Re... | Twitter

JPEG %  
Metadata  
Original



<b>Filename:</b>	Soldier_Arlington.jpg
<b>Filetime:</b>	2016-01-23 01:58:42 GMT
<b>File Type:</b>	image/jpeg
<b>Dimensions:</b>	651x960
<b>Color Channels:</b>	3
<b>File Size:</b>	66,605 bytes

# Would you question this photo?

Upload or enter Image URL  

[Download the TinEye extension for Firefox](#)



  
JPEG, 651x960, 65.0 KB

## 35 Results

1 result belongs to an image collection.  
Searched over **14.584 billion images** in 0.6 seconds.  
for image: [http://s20.postimg.org/y97oyctnx/Soldier\\_Arlington.jpg](http://s20.postimg.org/y97oyctnx/Soldier_Arlington.jpg)

Results will expire for unregistered users. [Login](#) or [register](#) for a free account to start saving your searches.  
TinEye is free to use for non-commercial purposes. See our [Products and APIs](#) for commercial solutions.

Sort by: Best match ▾

« Prev 1 2 3 4 Next »



JPEG, 651x960, 59.5 KB

[Compare Match](#)

**karmadecay.com**

Image: SapAOnM.jpg  
Page: [results/u6569549](#)  
Crawled on 2016-02-15

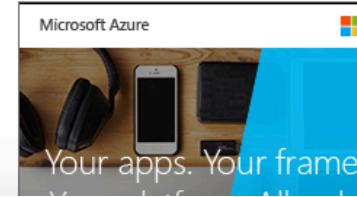
**imgur.com**

Image: SapAOnM.jpg  
Page: [SapAOnM](#)  
Crawled on 2016-02-10

[Image: SapAOnM.jpg](#)

**Filter by collection**

corbisimages.com (1)



# Would you question this photo?

Soldier Guarding Tomb of the Unknowns

Sign in to download a comping image | Open in a separate window

f t g+ Share

**Soldier Guarding Tomb of the Unknowns**

A member of the 3rd Infantry (The Old Guard) stands guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery.

Stock Photo ID: IH029976  
Date Photographed: ca. 1985  
Model Released: No Release  
Property Released: No Release  
Location: Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia, USA  
Credit: © CORBIS  
License Type: Rights Managed (RM)

A large blue arrow points from the text "No Release" to the Stock Photo ID "IH029976".

# Check it out: Check out Case Study 4.1 in the Verification Handbook



# Check the weather



what was the weather in Minneapolis, on Feb. 1, 2015



≡ Examples ↗ Random

Assuming Minneapolis (Minnesota, USA) | Use [Minneapolis \(Kansas, USA\)](#) instead

## Input interpretation:

weather	Minneapolis, Minnesota
	Sunday, February 1, 2015

## Recorded weather for Minneapolis, Minnesota:

Show metric More

time range	day of Sunday, February 1, 2015
temperature	(5 to 21) °F (average: 14 °F)
conditions	snow, overcast, cloudy, clear
relative humidity	(41 to 77)% (average: 58%)
wind speed	(7 to 21) mph (average: 15 mph)

Units »

PHOTO: Despite Sandy, Sol...

www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/10/29/163875922/photo-despite-sandy-soldiers-stand-guard-at-tomb-of-the-unknown-soldier

Most Visited M Multiqueue | Colum... O Outlook Web App M Columbia Missourian M Inbox - gl.berendze... f Facebook A ACES

This is perhaps one of the more stunning pictures we've come across today:



Soldiers of the 3rd Inf Reg. continue to stand guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, despite the worsening weather conditions surrounding Hurricane Sandy.

First Army Division East/Via Facebook

According to the First Army Division East, which posted the picture today on its Facebook page, the three soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Regiment stood guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the first heavy bands of rain from Hurricane Sandy moved across the Washington, D.C. area.

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america

# PHOTO: Despite Sandy, Soldiers Stand Guard At Tomb Of The Unknown Soldier

OCTOBER 29, 2012 12:49 PM ET

EYDER PERALTA



## Update at 1:16 p.m. ET. Not Taken During Sandy:

The Old Guard [reports on Twitter](#) that the photograph we posted of soldiers standing guard over the the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was taken in September. It was not taken during Sandy, as the First Army Division East, said in its Facebook page.

Here is one taken today, according to the Old Guard:



SHARE





# Should you use that social media or UGC photo?

- Make sure permission is sought
- Know the copyright rules
- Give credit (and ask how the uploader wants to be credited)
- Have a policy in advance
- When in doubt, don't use it or select another method to share or display that information

# Embed tweets

This photo was sent by tweet to Omaha.com. Instead of lifting it, they embedded the tweet to illustrate the story.



Ofc Mike Bossman

@OPDofcBossman

 Follow

@OWHnews here you go.  
[pic.twitter.com/D9oQoYEyoS](http://pic.twitter.com/D9oQoYEyoS)

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More



# Tweet embed on ColumbiaMissourian.com

Tarun Shukla, a journalist for the [Indian business newspaper Mint](#) and a 2015 Alfred Friendly Press Fellow, was on the flight when passengers felt "a wobble and a drop" as the plane nestled into the mud.



Tarun Shukla

@shukla\_tarun

Follow

Flight canceled. This couldnt be pulled out today. [@AmericanAir](#).  
#avgeek

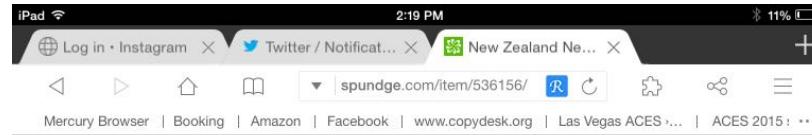
5:40 PM - 4 Apr 2015

8 RETWEETS 2 FAVORITES



An hour later, the flight was canceled. Passengers were let off of the plane and a Columbia Fire Department bus ferried them back to the terminal.

# Should you use that social media or UGC photo?



## New Zealand Newspaper Makes 'Ap-palling' Front Page Photo Mistake by Using Facebook

July 28, 2014 by Published on July 28, 2014 by DL Cade Via PetaPixel  
Curated by Craig Silverman in Verification





In the age of social media, major publications frequently source photos from Facebook or Twitter profiles. But as the *NZ Herald* recently discovered, this can lead to major, [embarrassing mistakes](#).

Yesterday, the publication set out to tell [the tragic story](#) of New Zealand-born Israeli soldier Guy Boyland, who was killed in Gaza. But on the very front page, where the paper presumably meant to publish an image of Boyland, they instead used [a Getty Image](#) of deceased Jackass star Ryan Dunn.

The mixup, it seems, happened when the paper decided to grab an image from Boyland's Facebook instead of reaching out to the family or other official sources. [Boyland bears a slight resemblance to Dunn](#) and had, it seems, used the photo of the deceased actor as a profile pic at some point. It was this photo that the *Herald* unwittingly published on its front page:

[#117082038 / gettyimages.com](#)

The mistake was, of course, noticed eventually and corrected on the online version (complete with an apology to readers and the Boyland family) but the print publication is still out there and some, like writer and founder of the website Whale Oil Beef Hooked Cameron Slater, feel the mistake is unconscionable.



# Should you use that UGC photo?



Christ for All Nations

**Reinhard Bonnke preaches during a 2000 Christ for All Nations crusade in Lagos, Nigeria, which the ministry said drew 6 million people over six days.**

## CORRECTION

• A photograph appearing with a story on page A1 about Reinhard Bonnke on Monday was digitally manipulated by the evangelist's organization to superimpose the preacher's image on a crowd of about 1.6 million gathered for a 2000 crusade in Lagos, Nigeria. Mary-Kathryn Manuel, U.S. director for

Bonnke's Christ for All Nations, said the photo was a combined shot of the crowd during daylight hours and Bonnke preaching after nightfall. The photo, provided to the newspaper by Bonnke's crusade, was not represented to the newspaper as a digitally altered image. The Houston Chronicle apologizes for this error.

Look for visuals that are meant  
to distract or misrepresent



Look for visuals that are meant  
to distract or misrepresent



# Credibility and corrections

Sourcing and credibility are important no matter the platform:

1. Do your Web research ... and show it.
2. Link any online source of news information: news releases, video, transcripts, other news reports.
3. When mistakes are made, put corrections on all platforms.
4. Have a social media corrections policy. Tweet corrections and contact those who retweeted your errors, so they can correct them as well.



**Craig Silverman** @CraigSilverman

Jan 3

@gerrrib @andrewphelps Ideally, you want to message folks who RTd to direct them to the corrected info so they can spread that, too.

 View conversation



**Craig Silverman** @CraigSilverman

Jan 3

Yes! MT @gerrrib: Had an inaccurate attribution in a tweet from my news org. Sent a correction tweet. Figure @CraigSilverman would approve.

[Expand](#)

# Resources:

- [verificationhandbook.com](#)

Some digital sources that can help you track down claims (find more in the Verification Handbook):

- [SearchSystems.net](#): an international directory of free public records.
- [Snopes.com](#): a site dedicated to debunking Internet hoaxes, which can be used to cross-check UGC.
- [Veri.ly platform](#): allows users to ask specific questions (specifically during a crisis) and provide UCG evidence for and against.
- [MediaBugs](#): Tracks, corrects media errors.
- [MemeTracker](#): Stanford Network Analysis Project
- Verificationjunkie.com: Tracks verification tools.
- Article: Journalist's Resource:  
[Tools for verifying and assessing the validity of social media and user-generated content](#)

# Contact info:

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[gerri@copydesk.org](mailto:gerri@copydesk.org)