

Detecting and combating bias in news media: Can technology do the job?

Description

These days, students are exposed to “too much” information and expected to be savvy, informed learners without proper preparation or readiness. We cannot ignore the fact that as students go through puberty, they make choices to become who they are, and many of the things they take in from outside while transitioning into adulthood could easily influence them. The bias they are exposed to could shape them in certain ways without them even knowing. I wanted to explore how we detect bias in news media and whether we can use technology tools to combat bias.

According to a posting by FAIR, “Media Literacy Guide: How to Detect Bias in News Media,” a media watch group, in order to detect bias, we must consider many factors such as the source of information, the language used, and the context in which the information is presented. The media outlets could have a particular viewpoint they want to press on, and their way of using “language” could evoke emotions and influence the viewers. Also, bias can be apparent in the headline, through selection and omission, through placement, by photos, captions, and camera angles, through use of names and titles, and bias by choice of words (UW Libraries, 2020). Depending on how the stories are covered and reported, it could change the whole picture. The biased news can be misleading and incorrect. Therefore, it is crucial to practice critical thinking to get the entire story, check multiple sources, and be alert for biased information.

Many studies have been done on using AI to detect media bias. AI and machine learning algorithms can be trained to detect bias by analyzing words, phrases, and even tones. AI can also check the sources of information and how stories were covered. One example of AI being used to detect bias is from the Bipartisan Press website.

“This website is the Bipartisan Press. Founded in 2018, it has developed an AI model for determining the political bias of its own articles and any text you might find on the web. Based on a regression model for machine learning, it’s capable of natural language processing (NLP) and of text classification. And because it has been trained on a large database of articles (pre-categorized according to bias), it can classify texts according to their direction (“left” or “right”) and degree (“minimal” to “extreme”) of bias”. And according to the website’s own research, it can classify the bias of articles to a 96% accuracy, with an average deviation of only 7%. (Chandler, 2020)”

There are also other websites and digital tools available online to combat media bias: **NewsGuard** is a technology tool that rates the credibility of news. This browser uses AI algorithms to analyze news websites and indicates the credibility and transparency of sources. **Media Bias Chart** is another website that uses human analysis and machine learning algorithms to categorize news sources based on their political bias and accuracy (Warren, 2023).

To combat media bias, we cannot rely on technology alone. We must equip ourselves to become empowered learners. As stated in ISTE Standards for Learners 1.3 Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative

artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others. *1.3.b Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.*
1.3.d Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions

Students should take charge of their own learning to educate themselves about different types of media bias and how to detect them. They can exercise critical thinking to analyze multiple sources, compare and contrast the views and take actions to hold media organizations accountable for accuracy. We have to do the work. However, we have the technology to finally help us. Learning to use these digital tools available to detect and combat bias is part of being an empowered learner.

References

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