Call for abstracts for international conference
'Checking the Fact-Checkers: A Global Perspective'

Conference dates: 18-19 July 2022
Organized by Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

Organizers:
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In recent years, fact checking has emerged as an integral topic in journalism studies across the world. This is in no small part due to the growing menace of fake news, mis-and-disinformation, especially on social media. Thus what began, in many ways, as a simple, small-scale antidote to a recognizable but seemingly erratic problem (misinformation) is now becoming part of a more systematic response that deserves attention in its own right.

This growth in fact-checking organizations and efforts raises its own questions about best practices, accountability, and cultural sensitivity. For example, much of the work of fact-checking takes place within Western and even more specifically, US-based organizations/think-tanks/universities. While these efforts may be successful at fighting misinformation in the U.S. and Western contexts, it is a different question as to whether they should be simply repeated/replicated in other nations where U.S. social media companies operate. Other questions revolve around ownership and influence. In particular, when media companies run their own fact-checking operations, how is accountability maintained?

This pioneering conference will aim to provide fresh perspectives on fact-checking as a global phenomenon. It takes seriously the hope, and risks, that "fact-checking" processes get to decide what is real or fake. It thus poses the basic questions: What are the basic principles of fact-checking? What are the processes, practices and criteria for evaluating the truth at scale? What are the universal criteria if any? What are the culturally specific criteria in certain national/regional contexts. What algorithm approaches can be applied to scale and improve fact checks?

Paper abstracts are invited for this multidisciplinary conference which will critically examine the burgeoning fact-checking phenomenon in its various dimensions. Aiming to push the frontiers of fact-checking, the conference hopes to generate an exchange of ideas and insights between academics and professionals to improve the

quality of information about fact-checkers as well as to scrutinize their agendas and activities. We welcome papers on any aspect of this theme. The aim is not just limited to examine the cultural and national variations in the processes, practices and criteria of fact-checking, but also to uncover the challenges, difficulties and obstacles faced by fact-checkers in remaining independent and developing the diversity of perspectives on checking facts emanating from beyond the Western world as well as their implications for developing shared principles and standards, informed by local contexts, around what quality fact-checking can and should do.

This two-day conference will be a multi-sessional event attended by number of distinguished scholars, media professionals, industry representatives and policy experts as well as researchers from all over the world. All selected abstracts will be sponsored to attend the conference. A selection of the papers will be published as an edited volume by a leading international publisher. We are aiming to approach Routledge in New York for inclusion of the proposed book in their Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies series to be edited by Dr. Céline Yunya Song, Professor Daya Thussu (both of HKBU) and Dr. Drew Margolin (Cornel University, USA).

The topics include, but are not limited to:
- Criteria for fact-checking: selection biases
- The growth of a global fact-checking industry
- Funding and facilitation of fact-checking
- The efficacy of IFCN (International Fact Checking Network)
- The role of global digital giants Facebook and Google in fact-checking
- Comparative studies of fact-checking
- Procedures and ethics being challenged by other value systems (human rights/free speech /privacy/news worthiness)
- Reliability of sources for fact-checking
- 'Adversarial' fact-checking
- Fact-checkers affiliations with media organizations, government, enterprises, academic institutions, NGOs etc.
- Strengths and weaknesses of growing public participation in fact-checking
- Uses and abuses of fact-checking services
- Politics of platforms on which fact-checks are disseminated
- Procedures of fact-checking: ratings systems, approaches
- Fact-checking and AI
- Disparity of automatic checking approaches between different linguistic contexts
- Checking facts in controlled media environments
- Computational algorithm for fact-checking
- The weaponization of fact checks
- How COVID drove the evolution of fact-checking
- Third party fact-checking projects
- Fact check & media literacy

- False factcheckers and memetic misinformation
- The transparency of fact-checking
- Using machine learning approaches in fact checks
- The promise and limits of automated fact-checking
- The challenge of spreading verified information
- The profit motives behind fact checks
- The techniques and tools of debunking false information
- Checking facts vs. checking narratives

Submission Guidelines
Please email paper abstracts to Carrie Zhang (carriez@hkbu.edu.hk) by 20 February 2022
Individual paper proposals must include:
- Title of paper
- Abstract (300 words maximum), which should include a clear explanation of how the paper fits the conference theme, its central argument(s), and a summary of its substance
- Authors' names, academic/professional affiliations, a 50-word bio-note, and email addresses

Organizing Committee Members
Professor Yu Huang, Dean, School of Communication & Film, HKBU
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