



## Media Contact

Deborah Lohse | SCU Media Communications | [dlohse@scu.edu](mailto:dlohse@scu.edu) | 408-554-5121

### **Leading News Outlets Establish Transparency Standards to Help Readers Identify Trustworthy News Sources**

*Google, Facebook, Bing and Twitter to use these “Trust Indicators” to highlight credible journalism*

**SANTA CLARA, Calif.**, Nov. 16, 2017 --- At a time when the public’s trust in news is declining in much of the world, the news industry is launching a new set of transparency standards that help people easily assess the quality and reliability of journalism.

Leading media companies representing dozens of news sites have begun to display Trust Indicators, which provide clarity on the organizations’ ethics and other standards, the journalists’ backgrounds, and how they do their work. These indicators, created by leaders from [more than 75 news organizations](#) as part of the nonpartisan Trust Project, also show what type of information people are reading – news, opinion, analysis or advertising.

Each indicator is signaled in the article and site code, providing the first standardized technical language for platforms to learn more from news sites about the quality and expertise behind journalists’ work. Google, Facebook, Bing and Twitter have all agreed to use the indicators and are investigating and piloting ideas about how to best to use them to surface and display quality journalism.

The Trust Project is led by award-winning journalist Sally Lehrman of Santa Clara University’s Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, and hosted by the Center.

The German press agency dpa, The Economist, The Globe and Mail, the Independent Journal Review, Mic, Italy’s La Repubblica and La Stampa, Trinity Mirror and the Washington Post are among the companies going live with the Trust Indicators this month.

An international consortium of news organizations is collaborating in the Trust Project. Their work is essential at a time when only one third of Americans [polled by Gallup](#)<sup>1</sup> say they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in news media. In Europe, similar problems are emerging. In the United Kingdom, only 43 percent of people [in a 2017 Reuters Institute](#)<sup>2</sup> survey said they agreed that the news can be trusted, a significant drop from the prior year.

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<sup>1</sup>[Americans’ Trust in Mass Media Sinks to New Low, Gallup, September 2016.](#)

<sup>2</sup>[Digital News Report, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2017, p. 21](#)



“In today’s digitized and socially networked world, it’s harder than ever to tell what’s accurate reporting, advertising, or even misinformation,” Lehrman said. “An increasingly skeptical public wants to know the expertise, enterprise and ethics behind a news story. The Trust Indicators put tools into people’s hands, giving them the means to assess whether news comes from a credible source they can depend on.”

### *The Trust Project’s Origins*

Spurred by editors concerns about the impact of technology on news quality, in 2014, Lehrman began building a network of news companies willing to take steps to instill greater trust in the journalism they produced. Senior news editors created the Trust Indicators based on in-depth user interviews, combining user needs with journalism’s highest values.

"News consumers need a way to tell media companies what we expect from them, the types of news we can count on and will pay for. The Trust Indicators set standards for media outlets and allow newspeople to commit to good faith reporting that's worth buying," said Craig Newmark, founder of craigslist, whose philanthropic fund was an early supporter of the Trust Project. The project is funded by the Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund, Google, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Democracy Fund and the Markkula Foundation.

The eight core indicators are:

- **Best Practices: *What Are Your Standards?*** Who funds the news outlet? What is the outlet’s mission? Plus commitments to ethics, diverse voices, accuracy, making corrections and other standards.
- **Author Expertise: *Who Reported This?*** Details about the journalist who wrote the story, including expertise and other stories they have worked on.
- **Type of Work: *What Is This?*** Labels to distinguish opinion, analysis and advertiser (or sponsored) content from news reports.
- **Citations and References:** For investigative or in-depth stories, greater access to the sources behind the facts and assertions.
- **Methods:** Also for in-depth stories, information about why reporters chose to pursue a story and how they went about the process.
- **Locally Sourced?** Lets people know when the story has local origin or expertise.
- **Diverse Voices:** A newsroom’s efforts to bring in diverse perspectives.
- **Actionable Feedback:** A newsroom’s efforts to engage the public’s help in setting coverage priorities, contributing to the reporting process, ensuring accuracy and other areas.

"At Mic, credibility is our currency," said Mic Publisher Cory Haik. "The most important thing we can do as news producers is have the trust of our audience, and by offering transparency into



our reporting process, we're taking important steps in building and maintaining that trust. We're happy to be a part of an initiative that has a focus so deeply aligned with our efforts.”

Other organizations including BBC collaborated in defining the Trust Indicator editorial and technical standards, and in developing the processes for implementing these. Haymarket Media Company will be implementing the Trust Indicators on three brands by the end of the year. While some outlets already disclose information included in the Trust Indicators, the new system standardizes this information across the industry, making it easier for both the public and news distribution platforms to find it.

### *A New Level of Transparency for News Search*

At the same time that news sites are bolstering their transparency through the Trust Indicators, digital platforms aim to incorporate them into the way they display news stories. The Trust Indicators are integrated into the latest Schema.org technical vocabulary release with new language to capture news organization publishing principles and news content types, among other concepts. Additional vocabulary is to be proposed in our ongoing collaboration.

“Quality journalism has never been more important,” said Richard Gingras, vice president of news products at Google. “Partnering with the Trust Project since its conception has been of significant importance to Google, in large part because we believe the indicators can help our algorithms better understand authoritative journalism – and help us to better surface it to consumers. We hope to use the Type of Work indicator to improve the accuracy of article labels in Google News, and indicators such as Best Practices and Author Info in our Knowledge Panels. We believe this is a great first step for the Trust Project and look forward to future efforts as well.”

In early October, Facebook began to [test a new feature to give people additional context on the articles](#) they see in News Feed. Starting today, they will begin displaying the Trust Indicators through this module, initially rolling them out to a small group of publishers, with plans to expand more broadly over the coming months. “The Trust Indicators will provide a new level of accessibility and insight into the news that people on Facebook see day in and day out,” said Alex Hardiman, head of news products at Facebook. “We view this as a great next step in our ongoing efforts overall to enhance people's understanding of the sources and trustworthiness of news on our platform.”

A growing number of news outlets are expected to display the indicators over the next six months, with a second phase of news partners beginning implementation work soon. In addition, the Trust Project worked with the Institute for Nonprofit News to develop a WordPress plugin that enables qualified publishers to incorporate the Trust Indicators.



### **About the Trust Project**

The Trust Project is an international consortium of news and digital companies that are collaborating to build a more trustworthy and trusted press. Led by journalist Sally Lehrman, it is hosted by Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Over several years, the

Project interviewed people around the globe to find out what's important to them when it comes to news and what makes a story trustworthy. Lehrman took that research and worked with top news leaders around the world to identify and design a digital system that meets those needs: the Trust Indicators.

### **About Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University**

Founded in 1986 with a seed grant and initial endowment from Linda and [A.C. "Mike" Markkula Jr.](#), the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics brings the traditions of ethical thinking to bear on real world problems. Beyond a full range of programs for the Santa Clara University Community, the Center also serves professionals in fields from business to health care, from government to the social sector, providing innovative approaches to problems from fake news to privacy protection. Through its website and international collaborations, the Center brings ethical decision-making resources to the wider world. For more information see [www.scu.edu/ethics/](http://www.scu.edu/ethics/).

### **About Santa Clara University**

Santa Clara University, a comprehensive Jesuit, Catholic university located 40 miles south of San Francisco in California's Silicon Valley, offers its more than 9,000 students rigorous undergraduate curricula in arts and sciences, business, and engineering; master's degrees in business, education, counseling psychology, pastoral ministry, and theology; and law degrees and engineering doctoral degrees. Distinguished nationally by one of the highest graduation rates among all U.S. master's universities, California's oldest operating higher-education institution demonstrates faith-inspired values of ethics and social justice. For more information, see [www.scu.edu](http://www.scu.edu).



*From the Trust Project's Funders and Partners*

“Democracy depends on a robust and trustworthy public square where people can debate and discuss the issues critical to our communities. While the debates over fake news have thrust trust in journalism into the spotlight over the past year, the Trust Project has been grappling with these issues and ideas for years. As a bridge between newsrooms and technology companies, the Trust Project is helping journalists develop new ways to earn trust and ensuring that social platforms can help people find that trustworthy reporting.” – Josh Stearns, associate director of the Public Square Program at Democracy Fund.

"The launch of the Trust Project has been sorely needed in the modern media landscape. The commitment from Sally Lehrman and her team to bring trust to digital media in a balanced and thoughtful way has been inspiring to watch unfold. IJR is proud to participate alongside so many towering brands. News consumers are increasingly looking for trust online, and the Trust Project's role and collaboration with outlets and platforms to help distinguish fact from fiction is vital not only for the future of the media industry but society.” – Alex Skatell, founder, the Independent Journal Review

"News consumers, regular, people, need a way to tell news people what we expect in news that we can trust and will pay for. The Trust Indicators are the way for news people to commit to good faith reporting that's worth buying." – Craig Newmark, the Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund.

"We are delighted to be a launch partner of the Trust Project as we endeavor to make it simpler for readers of all ages and from all around the world to discover more about who we are and what we believe in. We are proud of the journalism we do across all our titles - regional, national, in print and online. Part of our editorial mission is to help our readers make sense of a rapidly changing world, and we can help with that by providing more information about ourselves, the stories we write and how we work." – Ann Gripper, executive editor for Digital at Trinity Mirror

“We are proud to be in the project with la Repubblica and La Stampa since day one. Restoring and tightening the trust relationship with our readers is pivotal to make our journalism thrive. Doing so not only in human, but also in machine readable format can help search engines and social networks to recognize and highlight quality reporting.” – Massimo Russo, managing director Digital Division, Gedi

"The transparency of our sourcing and working methods have always been of great importance to dpa. We provide detailed supplementary information to our customers for every story we cover. In the future these details will be displayed to internet users as part of the Trust Project. Everyone will be able to benefit from this transparency, because good journalism is about being trustworthy." - Roland Freund, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, dpa



"The Trust Project allows us to be part of a set of systems and tools that will allow readers to easily understand our point of view and what's behind it." – Zanny Minton Beddoes, editor-in-chief of The Economist.