



NewsGuard Announces Launch of Free Browser Plugin with Support from Microsoft

The 'Know Who's Feeding You the News' launch campaign partners with public libraries across the country; NewsGuard advisory board announced

(New York, August 23, 2018) NewsGuard Technologies, which uses trained journalists to rate and supply Nutrition Label reviews for thousands of news and information websites, today announced the immediate availability of its first product: extensions for Microsoft Edge and Google Chrome browsers that will be available to all Edge and Chrome users and be distributed and made available to libraries, news literacy groups and schools for use at their facilities. Public libraries will also provide information for their patrons about NewsGuard and how to install the browser extensions on their devices at home.

The plugin is free to all users.

NewsGuard also announced that Microsoft Corp. will sponsor the news literacy program.

“Today marks the beginning of common sense, transparent, accountable human intelligence directed at solving the problem of false or unreliable online news that artificial intelligence has been struggling with,” said NewsGuard co-founder Steven Brill.

“Whether it’s the website of a newspaper, broadcaster, opinion journal, think tank, newly trending blogger or government propaganda arm, all sites in a news feed or search look much the same,” added NewsGuard co-founder Gordon Crovitz. “Now, with NewsGuard’s ratings and Nutrition Labels, readers will know who and what’s behind what they’re reading.”

“We’re delighted to be partnering with NewsGuard in this common-sense news literacy initiative,” said Stacey Aldrich, the state librarian of Hawaii and the incoming president of Chief Officers of State Library Agencies. “Adding this service on computers used by our patrons continues the long tradition of librarians arming readers with more information about what they are reading.”

“Defending against disinformation campaigns is one of the key focus areas of our Defending Democracy Program and access to tools like NewsGuard is critical in arming people with the information they need to evaluate the content they’re seeing online and help them make informed decisions,” said Tom Burt, Corporate Vice President of Customer Security and Trust, Microsoft.

In addition, NewsGuard today is announcing charter members of its advisory board: Tom Ridge, the first Secretary of Homeland Security (George W. Bush administration); Richard Stengel, former editor of Time magazine and Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy (Obama administration); (Ret.) General Michael Hayden, former Director of the CIA, former Director of the National Security Agency and former Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence (George W. Bush administration); Don Baer, chairman of Burson, Cohn & Wolfe and former White House Communications Director (Clinton administration); Elise Jordan, political analyst, NBC, and former speechwriter for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; John

Battelle, co-founding editor of Wired and founding chief executive of Industry Standard magazines; and Jessica Lessin, founder and editor-in-chief of The Information. NewsGuard will benefit from the expertise of its advisors with national security experience, which is relevant to the company's efforts to counter false information, misinformation, propaganda and disinformation, as well as the expertise of its advisors with experience in Silicon Valley and journalism.

NewsGuard's browser extensions are launching with ratings and write-up of sites responsible for about 82% of the news and information consumed and shared online in English in the U.S., with the number increasing every day (and with Spanish language sites being added by the end of the year). By October, in time for the mid-term elections in the U.S., NewsGuard expects to have completed ratings of all of the thousands of news and information sites among the 4,500 sites responsible for 98% of the content shared online. (For now, a gray icon indicates websites whose ratings and reviews are pending.) The easy to install browser extension—for Edge, go to <http://bit.ly/2N0ASX6> and for Chrome, go to <http://bit.ly/2mMUEKj> and install with one click—will produce NewsGuard's Red and Green rating icons and Nutrition Labels on news and information websites included in a Facebook or Twitter feed or a Bing or Google search. (Additional search and news feed applications are being planned.)

By hovering over the icon, users will see the summary write-up and can then click to read NewsGuard's full Nutrition Label, which describes the background of the site and, by analyzing its adherence to nine specific journalism standards, fully explains why the site received a Red or Green.

“By rating sites for reliability instead of fact checking individual articles,” Brill explained, “we are able to achieve scale. However, we will cite (after re-reporting their findings) the work of the fact-checking organizations that are examining individual articles after they have been published. In fact, we'll be their megaphones. But by calling attention to generally unreliable sites and giving them a Red rating, which we say means ‘Proceed with caution,’ we'll be arming people with the information they need before they read or share news or information. We're not trying to censor anything,” he added, “which is something neither we as journalists nor librarians would ever support and should never support. Rather, we're arming readers with information about sources, which is what librarians have done since the beginning of libraries.”

In addition, a separate “SWAT Team” of NewsGuard journalist analysts will be on call on a 24/7 basis to receive and act on alerts about sites with stories that are suddenly trending, but that have not yet been rated, including because the site was just launched to promote a fictitious, sensational story. NewsGuard analysts will rate these sites in real time, thereby limiting the possibility that false news will go viral without a NewsGuard Red “Proceed with caution” label.

NewsGuard will collect no personal information from anyone who uses the browser extensions. The company is not in the advertising business.

Rather, its revenue will come later this year from search engines and social platforms paying to use its ratings and Nutrition Labels in their news feeds and search results. When the data is distributed by the platforms from their end, it will be a simpler user experience, be far

more ubiquitous, and, most important, be accessible on mobile devices as well as via web browsers.

NewsGuard has been in discussions with all of the major digital platforms and expects to announce more partnerships in the Fall.

“The digital platforms that lead the world in social media and search have expressed interest in our approach to solving their problem with false news, misinformation and disinformation,” explained Crovitz. “Our browser extension version displays our ratings and write-ups for them to evaluate in the context of their other efforts and decide if our journalistic approach to a journalistic problem adds an important added layer of protection for their users. We believe that arming users with more information about the websites they encounter online is a better alternative to calls for the platforms to censor certain news sites. Instead, they can arm their users with independent, credible, transparent, and accountable information about who is feeding them the news.”

“To a machine, all news sites look like legitimate news sites, which is why algorithms can identify pornography and hate sites, but cannot spot unreliable news sources. Human intelligence can solve this problem,” Crovitz said. “We have dozens of reporters who serve as our analysts, editors, fact checkers, and senior editors, including Steve and me, reviewing each write-up. We also seek comment from sites whenever we have a critical point among the nine criteria to report in our write-up. Professional journalists seek comment. Algorithms don’t. In many cases after our inquiries such as about the lack of a clear, effective corrections policy or clearly labeling advertising, sites have changed their practices, and we were able to improve their rating. Unlike an algorithm,” he said, “we want people to game our system, because it improves journalism online.”

For the Microsoft blog post, “Defending Against Disinformation in Partnership with NewsGuard,” click here:

<https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/?p=60870>

For information about NewsGuard’s ratings process, click here:

<https://www.newsguardtech.com/ratings/criteria-for-and-explanation-of-ratings/>

For information about “Why Should You Trust Us,” click here:

<https://www.newsguardtech.com/about/why-should-you-trust-us/>

To see what the libraries are distributing to their patrons to explain NewsGuard, click here: https://www.newsguardtech.com/newsguard_library_informational_handout

For information about the reporters and editors behind NewsGuard, click here:

<https://www.newsguardtech.com/about/team/>

For information about NewsGuard’s investors, click here:

<https://www.newsguardtech.com/about/our-investors/>

To see a Gallup study assessing the effectiveness of an approach modeled on NewsGuard's, click here: <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/assessing-the-effect-of-news-source-ratings-on-news-content>

Most important, to download the free browser extension and experience the NewsGuard ratings and write-ups, click here for the Edge browser extension: <http://bit.ly/2N0ASX6>, and here for the Chrome browser extension: <http://bit.ly/2mMUEKj>

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