

Illinois Prairie District Public Library Joins NewsGuard in News Literacy Partnership

Patrons at all six branches will soon be able to see reliability ratings of news sources they encounter while using library computers, making Illinois Prairie District NewsGuard's first official library partner in the state.

(Metamora, Illinois, August 7, 2019) The Illinois Prairie District Public Library is collaborating with New York City-based startup NewsGuard to provide library patrons with a news literacy tool to help them assess the reliability of the news and information websites they see while using library computers. With NewsGuard's browser extension installed, visitors to the library's six branches serving more than 22,000 area residents will have access to Nutrition Label reviews of thousands of news and information websites, which show up next to links in search results and on social media feeds

Ahead of downloading NewsGuard's browser extension on all patron computers, the library's Germantown Hills branch will host a workshop entitled "Fighting Fake News with Nutrition Labels for Websites: Learn How to be Your Own NewsGuard." The workshop, which is free and open to the public, will take place on Thursday, August 29, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., led by NewsGuard's Director of News Literacy Partnerships Macaela Bennett, who is a Central Illinois native.

"We're delighted to be partnering with NewsGuard, which does with online content what librarians have been doing with printed content since the invention of libraries — give readers the basic information they need about what they are about to read," said Illinois Prairie District Public Library Director Joel Shoemaker. "We're proud to be taking the lead in deploying NewsGuard's news literacy tool in Illinois."

NewsGuard analysts, who are trained journalists with varied backgrounds, rate websites based on nine binary, apolitical criteria of journalistic practice, including whether a site repeatedly publishes false content, regularly corrects or clarifies errors, avoids deceptive headlines, and whether it discloses ownership and management.

NewsGuard awards weighted points for each criterion and sums them up; a score of less than 60 earns a "red" rating, while 60 or more earns a "green" rating, which indicates it is generally reliable. NewsGuard also identifies which sites are satire — for example, the popular publication The Onion — and distinguishes platforms, such as YouTube and Wikipedia.

With its browser extension, NewsGuard displays its ratings next to links in search results and social media feeds. By installing the extension on more than 50 computers at its six branches, Illinois Prairie District Public Library is giving patrons more context for the news they encounter online and helping them build critical news literacy skills.

"Educators and librarians have long championed efforts to educate their communities about how to assess the veracity of information," said Macaela Bennett, Director of News Literacy Partnerships for NewsGuard. "NewsGuard's mission includes collaborating with these natural

partners to provide their students and patrons with access to tools that help them navigate the evolving information landscape.”

With support from Microsoft Corp., which is sponsoring NewsGuard’s free news literacy initiative, NewsGuard makes its browser extension available as a free teaching tool. Hundreds of library branches nationwide have already installed NewsGuard’s extension onto patron computers, and NewsGuard expects to add hundreds more to its list of news literacy partners, as well as middle schools, high schools, universities, and other educational organizations.

“Rather than censoring news sites and telling patrons what they can or cannot read, librarians can use NewsGuard to provide patrons with context about their sources,” said NewsGuard co-CEO Gordon Crovitz. “By reading NewsGuard’s Nutrition Label reviews of websites, which include detailed explanations of how a site fared on NewsGuard’s nine criteria, patrons will gain a better understanding of how to assess the credibility of information they encounter online.”

“Giving readers information about sources of information is what librarians have always seen as their mission,” added NewsGuard co-CEO Steven Brill. “That’s why these NewsGuard-library partnerships make so much sense and why they are now happening so quickly.”

Librarians and educators interested in bringing NewsGuard to their library or school can visit newsguardtech.com or contact Macaela Bennett at macaela.bennett@newsguardtech.com.

About Illinois Prairie District Public Library

The Illinois Prairie District Public Library was formed in July of 1950. It is the second oldest library district in Illinois. It encompasses eight townships: Cazenovia, Clayton, Linn, Metamora, Partridge, Spring Bay, and Worth. This is roughly the northern half of Woodford County. It covers 256 square miles. In 1980, the district served a population of 17,776. Today, the district serves 21,644 inhabitants. Bookmobile service to the schools in the district was provided for 45 years. It was discontinued when the schools developed their own libraries. The district provides service to its patrons through its branch libraries in Benson, Germantown Hills, Metamora, Roanoke, Spring Bay, and Washburn. The Metamora branch houses the district administrative staff. Over the last 15 years, the district has expanded its branches at Spring Bay, Roanoke, and Benson. The library district has recently completed an expansion of its Germantown Hills branch.

The Illinois Prairie District Public Library exists to provide materials, programming, and other services in current demand which reflect contemporary trends and thinking. The district and its branches strive to serve as a center for general and local community gathering and information.

About NewsGuard Technologies

Launched in March 2018 by media entrepreneur Steven Brill and former Wall Street Journal publisher Gordon Crovitz, NewsGuard provides credibility ratings and detailed “Nutrition Labels” for thousands of news and information websites. NewsGuard’s ratings and Nutrition Labels can be licensed by internet service providers, browsers, news aggregators, and social

media and search platforms in order to make NewsGuard's information about news websites available to their users.

NewsGuard's trained journalists rate news websites based on nine basic, apolitical criteria of journalistic practice. These ratings are made available at no cost to consumers through its browser extension, which is available on Chrome, Safari, Edge and Firefox browsers, and on mobile devices through the Edge mobile browser for iOS and Android devices.

How NewsGuard works: Before publishing a rating and Nutrition Label for a website, NewsGuard analysts reach out to people responsible for the website to ask about any issues related to the nine criteria. As a result, more than 500 websites have made improvements to their online practices either during this pre-publication comment period or soon after publication of the rating and Nutrition Label.

NewsGuard's other U.S. office is based in Chicago, where its staff is led by Executive Editor James Warren, who spent much of his career as an editor at the Chicago Tribune.

For more information, including to download the browser extension and review the ratings process: newsguardtech.com

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