Information Literacy in Public Libraries Workshop Series

Hosted by the

Simmons Center for Information Literacy (SCIL)

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Center for Information Literacy

Simmons Center for Information Literacy

- Empowering people with the skills to locate and access trustworthy information, strengthen civic participation, and support an informed and engaged society.
- Find us!
  - https://www.simmons.edu/scil

- Follow us!



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Information Literacy Webinar Series

- Recordings and slides will be posted to the SCIL website
- All materials will be published in a practitioner's handbook
- Upcoming Sessions:
  - **IL Jam Session!**
    - October 23, 2pm ET
    - https://tinyurl.com/SCILJam
  - **Data Literacy in Libraries**
    - November 6, 2pm ET
    - https://tinyurl.com/SCILData

Housekeeping

- Sessions recorded
- Submit questions in the Q&A
- Raise electronic hand to ask questions on the microphone
- Please stay muted when not speaking

Is That a Fact? News Literacy and Fact Verification in the Age of AI

Laura Saunders
Simmons University School of Library and Information Science
Simmons Center for Information Literacy

Presented by Simmons Center for Information Literacy (SCIL)

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Agenda & Outcomes

- Background & definitions
- Evidence-based strategies
  - SIFT Method
  - SIFT for AI
  - Other approaches
- Wrap-up

- Explore the difference between fact and truth
- Apply evidence-based methods of fact verification
- Discuss the intersection of AI and fact-checking

Is That A Fact?



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Do You Remember Where You Were When the Bowling Green Massacre Didn't Happen?

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Truth: Per Merriam Webster

- the body of real things, events, and facts **: ACTUALITY**
- the state of being the case **: FACT**
- a transcendent fundamental or spiritual reality
- the property (as of a statement) of being in accord with fact or reality
- fidelity to an original or to a standard
- sincerity in action, character, and utterance

Fact: Per Merriam Webster

- something that has actual existence
- an actual occurrence
- a piece of information presented as having objective reality.
- the quality of being actual
- a thing done: such as
  - accessory after the *fact*

Ad Fontes Media

- The term “fact” is more appropriate to refer to things that can be objectively proven, independently of any person’s belief in them.
- The term “truth” is more appropriate for what people believe about facts. Truth is a squishier concept, because different people can take the same facts and believe different “truths” about them, which are informed by their own experiences, morality, religious beliefs, and so forth.

Nature of Facts

- Observable or measurable
- Related to an objective reality

Fact-based Questions(?)

- What Is the minimum wage?
- Who holds the record for curtain calls?
- What is your birthday?



Nature of Facts, Continued

- Facts can be
  - Blurry
  - Conditional
  - Contested
  - Evolving/ Changing

Fact-Checking: Lateral Reading

- Lateral vs. vertical reading
- SIFT method
- GFT (SIFT for AI)

S.I.F.T. Method

Developed by Michael Caulfield



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S.I.F.T.

- **S**top
- **I**nvestigate the source
- **F**ind better coverage
- **T**race claims back

NUTRITION

The coffee sweet spot: How much a day is safe — and linked to heart benefits

By Rachel Sacks

Published July 20, 2026, 12:26 p.m. ET

Pour another cup? Science says yes.

From reshaping gut bacteria to keeping you young, your morning cup of joe provides a lot when it comes to health.

And good news for java junkies: There can even be benefits for the heart — but only if you drink the right amount.





S

Stop!



I

Investigate the source

New York Post – Bias and Credibility

New York Post is rated Right-Center with Mixed factual reporting by Media Bias Fact Check.



Factual Reporting
Very High
High
Mostly Factual
MIXED
Low
Very Low

Detailed Report

Bias Rating: RIGHT-CENTER (4.9)
Factual Reporting: MIXED (5.9)
Country: **USA**
MBFC's Country Freedom Rank: MOSTLY FREE
Media Type: **Newspaper**
Traffic/Popularity: **High Traffic**
MBFC Credibility Rating: MEDIUM CREDIBILITY

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New York Post

Contents hide

Article Talk

The ***New York Post*** (***NY Post***), founded as the ***New York Evening Post*** (originally ***New-York Evening Post***), is an American conservative[3] daily tabloid newspaper published in New York City. The *Post* also operates three online sites: NYPost.com;[4]

Murdoch's News Corp bought the *Post* for US$30.5 million (equivalent to $173 million in 2025).[6][7] Since its acquisition by News Corp, the Post has been frequently criticized over the years for its controversial headlines and editorial choices along with accusations of bias in its political coverage.[8]

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F

Find better coverage

DISCOVER

THE SCIENCES | MIND | TECHNOLOGY | HEALTH | ENVIRONMENT | PLANET EARTH

American Heart Association Deems 5 Cups of Coffee Safe but Warns Against Energy Drinks

Learn how much caffeine is considered safe for your heart, why energy drinks may not be a great alternative, and why studying coffee's health impacts isn't so straightforward.

Written by Jenny Lehmann

Jul 20, 2026, 7:30 PM | 3 min read

Discover Magazine – Bias and Credibility

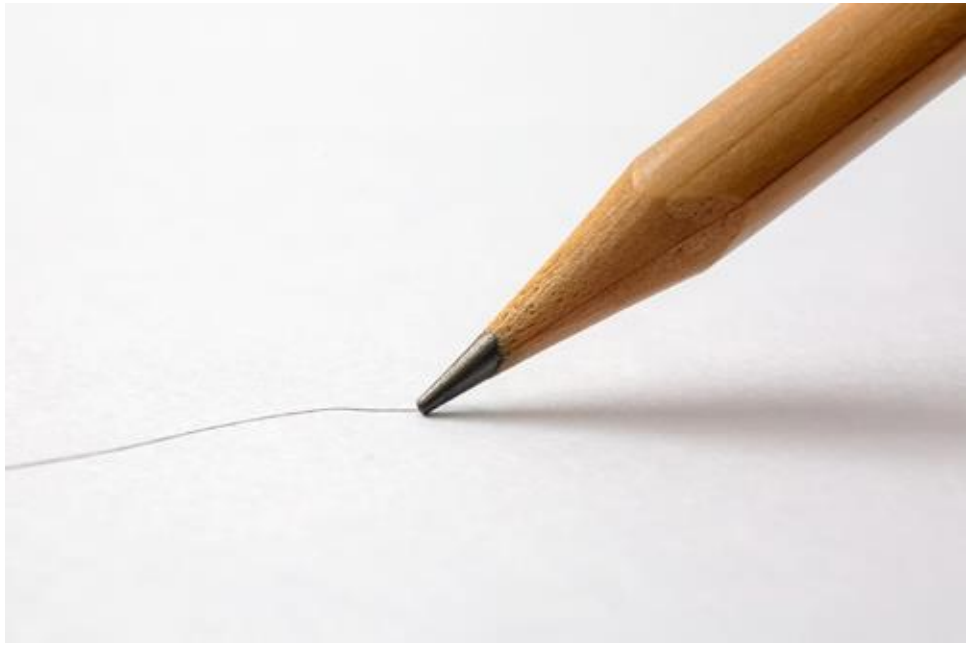
Discover Magazine is rated Pro-Science with High factual reporting by Media Bias Fact Check.

PRO-SCIENCE

Factual Reporting
Very High
HIGH
Mostly Factual
Mixed
Low
Very Low

Detailed Report

Bias Rating: PRO-SCIENCE
Factual Reporting: HIGH
Country: **USA**
MBFC's Country Freedom Rating: MOSTLY FREE
Media Type: **Magazine**
Traffic/Popularity: **Medium Traffic**
MBFC Credibility Rating: HIGH CREDIBILITY



T

Trace the claims, quotes, and media back to the original context

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NEWS RELEASE 20-JUL-2026

Coffee and heart health: How many cups of caffeinated coffee are safe to drink each day?

Although the relationship between caffeine and cardiovascular health is complex, the latest research indicates consuming up to 5 cups of caffeinated coffee per day (up to 400 mg of caffeine/day) is safe for most adults and may be linked to cardiovascular

Peer-Reviewed Publication
AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

Statement Highlights:

- The latest research indicates that consuming up to 400 mg of caffeine/day (equivalent to up to 5, 8-ounce cups of caffeinated coffee per day) is generally safe for most adults and appears to be linked to a lower risk of several cardiovascular conditions, including heart failure, heart disease and stroke in some individuals.
- However, higher amounts of caffeine, such as levels found in energy drinks including energy shots, may increase the risk of high blood pressure and/or irregular heart rhythm or arrhythmia.
- More research is needed to better understand caffeine's impact on the body, how different sources of caffeine impact heart health and how its impact may vary among different people, according to the scientific statement.

One More Step!

Check Your Emotions



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SIFT for AI

Also from Mike Caulfield

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AI for Evidence, Not Answers

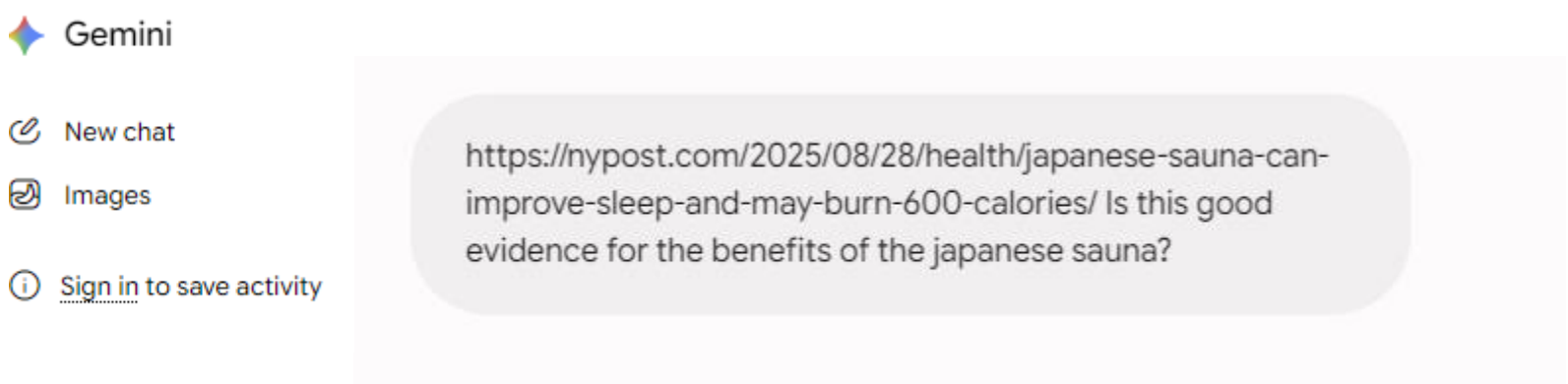
- Stop and get it in
- Investigate evidence & Find better sources
- Track it down

WELLNESS

This 'Japanese sauna' dome can relieve stress, improve sleep — and supposedly burn 600 calories

By Carly Stern
Published Aug. 28, 2025, 8:00 a.m. ET

Comments



When evaluating tabloid or lifestyle news headlines like *"Japanese sauna can improve sleep and may burn 600 calories,"* it is helpful to separate the claims using scientific evidence.

While saunas (including infrared or traditional heat therapies popularized or studied in various contexts) **do offer legitimate health benefits**, the specific claim about burning 600 calories is **misleading and exaggerated**, making the article *weak* evidence for that specific metric.

A breakdown of the two claims shows why:

1. The Claim: "May Burn 600 Calories" (Poor Evidence / Exaggerated)

- **The Reality:** Sitting in a sauna does increase your heart rate and metabolic rate slightly because your body is working to cool itself down (mimicking light cardiovascular stress). However, independent studies show that a typical sauna session burns only a modest

Investigate Evidence

- Ask for evidence, not answers
- Use neutral questions (like reference librarians!)
- Ask for additional information
- Ask for elaboration

Example Prompts

- Evaluate the claim that …
- Read the room: what do a variety of experts say about…
- Categorize the elements of this claim as unusual, unprecedented, noteworthy or normal. It's okay to have empty categories.
- Search for and reason about the evidence against this claim, then search for a reason about the evidence for this claim.

Evaluate the claim that Japanese saunas relieve stress, improve sleep, and burn calories. Display response in a table. Provide a citation to sources; identify the source as scientific, professional, or popular; give a brief overview of the findings; weigh the results as weak, moderate or strong with a brief explanation for the rating. Use only real sources. Do not make up citations or results. Prioritize scientific reports.

Claim	Source & Type	Overview of Findings	Weight of Evidence & Explanation
Relieves Stress	**Source:** Mayo Clinic Proceedings (2018) / *Scientific Review* *(Supported by general medical consensus via WebMD / GoodRx)*	Regular thermal exposure promotes muscular relaxation, reduces cortisol levels, and stimulates the release of endorphins, contributing to lower subjective stress and anxiety.	**Strong** Multiple observational and physiological studies link heat therapy to the downregulation of the sympathetic nervous system and the promotion of psychological relaxation.
Improves Sleep	**Source:** Review of Evidence on Sauna Bathing, Mayo Clinic Proceedings (2018) / *Scientific Review*	Passive heating raises core body temperature during the session; the subsequent sharp drop in body temperature post-sauna mimics natural circadian rhythms, facilitating deeper, more relaxed sleep.	**Moderate** While heavily supported by user reporting and physiological principles of thermoregulation, dedicated, large-scale randomized trials focusing exclusively on sleep architecture remain somewhat limited.
	Source:	Due to increased heart rate	**Weak (for the 600-calorie claim)**

Track It Down

- Follow the sources
- Check the answers given

Verify the AI!

Hallucinations happen…

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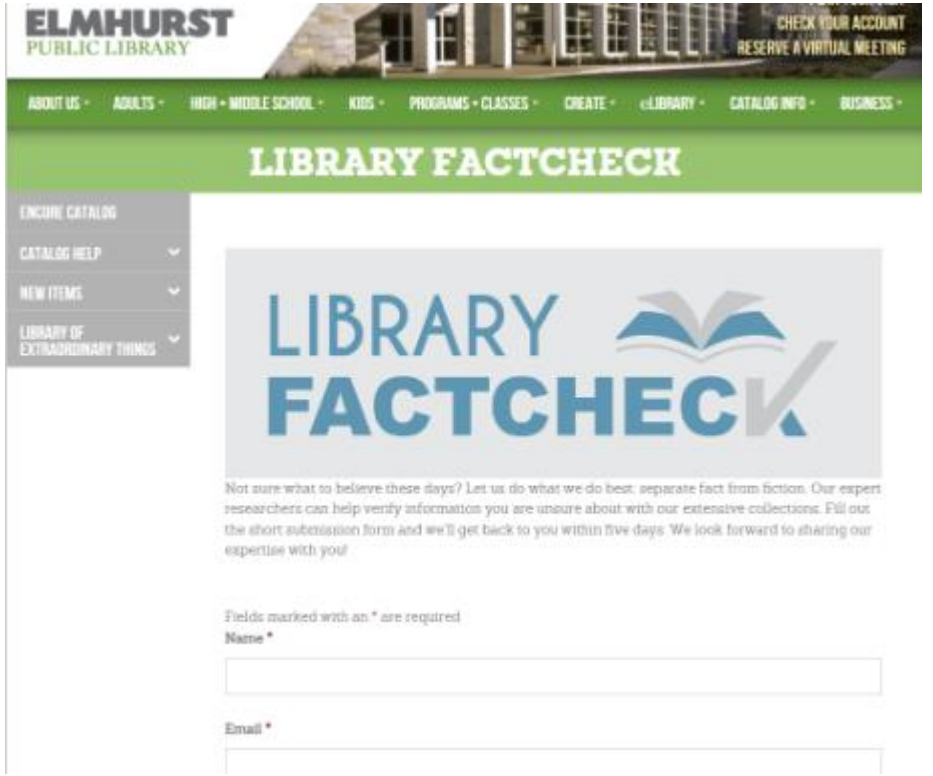
Additional Approaches to Combat Mis/Dis

Evidence-Based

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Debunking/Fact-checking

- Some effectiveness
- Libraries are trusted sources



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Human-based: Nudges & Accuracy Primes

- Asking/encouraging people to evaluate before sharing
  - Alerting to societal norms
  - Meant to “improve behavior”

Sample Prompts

- How important is it to you that you only share news articles if you have thought about them using reason and logic?
- One study found that more than 8 out of 10 people think it is very or extremely important to only share news articles if they are accurate
- Be skeptical of headlines. Investigate the source. Check the evidence.

Final Thoughts

- Lots of challenges
- AI can be both a support and a challenge
- Evidence supports librarian skills and information literacy
- We have a role to play

References

- Arechar, A.A., Allen, J., Berinsky, A.J. *et al.* Understanding and combatting misinformation across 16 countries on six continents. *Nat Hum Behav* **7**, 1502–1513 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01641-6
- Caulfield, M. & Wineburg, S. (2023). *Verified: How to think straight, get duped less and make better decisions*. University of Chicago.
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- Caulfield, M. (28 March, 2026). Above it, not in it. https://checkplease.neocities.org/ndol/
- Roozenbeek, J., Culloty, E. & Suiter, J. (2023). Countering misinformation: Evidence, knowledge gaps, and implications of current interventions. *European Psychologist, 28*(3), 189-205. https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000492
- Sample prompts: https://osf.io/4mv9z/files/63m4w?view_only=b2136618544346bcbd48f9ba43524235

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Survey: https://tinyurl.com/SCILFactSurvey

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