

# Facebook takes on a bigger role in journalism

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In this May 16, 2012, file photo, the Facebook logo is displayed on an iPad in Philadelphia. Facebook is launching a journalism project aimed at strengthening its ties with media organizations to help them grow their audience, come up with new products and generally promote trusted news in today's "post-truth" era. The move comes just weeks after the company has ramped up its efforts to fight the spread of "fake news" on its site. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke, File)

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ties with media organizations to help them expand their audiences, come up with new products and generally promote trusted news in today's "post-truth" era.

The project is in its early stages and as such, light on specifics. But the company envisions Facebook engineers working with news organizations to create new ways of telling stories and novel advertising or subscription models, right from the early stages of development. The company also wants to help promote "news literacy" and support local news.

"It's very early in the process but certainly something we are really excited about," said Dave Merrell, lead product manager at The Washington Post, which is among the [news organizations](#) working with Facebook. "We worked with Facebook on numerous products over the years, but often were not involved in the product development stage."

## INSTANT GRATIFICATION

With "Instant Articles," launched in 2015, the social network hosts and displays news items directly instead of pointing users to news websites. Such instant stories load faster on Facebook than those on outside links, and Facebook gives participating publishers a cut of the advertising revenue from Instant Articles.

But publishers also lose some of their ability to connect with their readers, understand their browsing habits and direct them to other stories and video. So Facebook plans to start testing a new feature of Instant Articles that will show readers multiple stories from the same news organization.

As part of that change, Facebook could also improve the way its algorithms recommend other stories—that "people also shared"—to users. Its automated system has sometimes suggested purported news

articles that included unverified information or that were only marginally related to the original story.

## FACEBOOK GROWS UP

The move suggests Facebook is starting to accept its outsized influence over how people get their news, even if it's not a traditional publisher itself. According to the Pew Research Center, more than 40 percent of American adults get news on Facebook.

And it follows the company's announcement last month that it is taking new measures to curb the spread of fake and misleading news on its huge and influential network.

The news literacy aspect of the project is relevant to that effort. Facebook says it will work with outside organizations on how to help "people in our community have the information they need to make decisions about which sources to trust." To start, the company is working with the News Literacy Project to produce a series of public service advertisements on the issue.

But Facebook acknowledges that its efforts to fight fake news, such as by making it easier for users to report false articles and working with outside fact-checkers to debunk such stories, are still very early.

The journalism project's goal is to increase transparency and help Facebook figure out its role in news, Facebook product director Fidji Simo said in an interview.

"(With) being a new kind of platform comes a new kind of responsibility," she said. "It's definitely something we are thinking about very carefully."

Working with [news](#) organizations, she added, will hopefully lead to products that will be "better than what we would have done on our own."

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