Code of ethics for Journalists and other Media Professionals

Ethical responsibility to Sources and Subjects

Minimize harm

It is essential that all risks of being inflammatory, misleading, or inconsiderate to subjects and sources be minimized. This is especially relevant to those engaging in original reporting. To minimize possible harm,

we encourage our writers to do the following:

• Ensure facts are correct by getting verification from multiple sources.

• Try to contact the subject of the article whenever possible.

• Not publish an article based solely on speculation, hunches or wild guesses.

• Before publishing, make a mental list of all parties involved in the article and think about how

each will feel about the article.

Avoid misrepresentation

Do not publish any sort of interview story without ensuring that the interviewee is absolutely happy with the articles final text. Even if this means giving up the interview - Wikinews will only lose out if it

offends interviewees - remember to respect that they have taken the time to talk to us.

Get all sides of a story

Ensure sources and quotes from both sides of an argument are included in articles to avoid being biased

towards either side. Ideally, all opinions expressed in an article should be direct quotes. Wikinews has no official opinion on anything; however, sources often do.

Respect anonymity

Any source that requests to remain anonymous is fully entitled to this. You are not obliged to bring up the possibility of anonymity, but you are obliged to honor requests for it. It is important not to apply undue pressure to the source if they do not wish to be named. At the same time, anonymous sources can make stories less credible, so it is important to make some effort to persuade reluctant sources to volunteer to go on the record. Explaining to a source why you would prefer them to go on the record is a gentle and ofteneffective way of persuading them to do so. In any case, the decision rests with the source.

Ethical responsibility to our Readers

To our readers we have the duty to be:

Independent

Wikinews is not owned by a corporate entity. It is a project that is under the banner of the non-profit

organization, the Wikimedia Foundation.

Neutral

All Wikimedia Foundation projects must conform to the policy of Neutral point of view. Wikinews is no

exception. Our responsibility to our readers is to provide news that contains no bias. This includes

removing and re-editing stories that have been determined to advocate a particular point of view to the

exclusion of others.

Truthful

Wikinews wants to be truthful. We want to bring the real information. We work hard to do that. We make sure what is being reported is truthful. We remove and re-edit stories that contain unverified sources and thus may be untruthful.

Accountable

In relation to being truthful, Wikinews wants to be accountable also. We make sure that what we are

reporting to the public can be accounted for. We take blame for stories that contain untruthful

information.

Accuracy and standards for factual reporting

• Reporters are expected to be as accurate as possible given the time allotted to story preparation and

the space available, and to seek reliable sources.

• Events with a single eyewitness are reported with attribution. Events with two or more independent

eyewitnesses may be reported as fact. Controversial facts are reported with attribution.

• Independent fact-checking by another employee of the publisher is desirable

• Corrections are published when errors are discovered

• Defendants at trial are treated only as having "allegedly" committed crimes, until conviction, when

their crimes are generally reported as fact (unless, that is, there is serious controversy about wrongful

conviction).

Opinion surveys and statistical information deserve special treatment to communicate in precise terms

any conclusions, to contextualize the results, and to specify accuracy, including estimated error and

methodological criticism or flaws.

Ethics and standards in practice

As with other ethical codes, there is perennial concern that the standards of journalism are being ignored.

One of the most controversial issues in modern reporting is media bias, especially on political issues, but

also with regard to cultural and other issues. Sensationalism is also a common complaint. Minor factual

errors are also extremely common, as almost anyone who is familiar with the subject of a particular report

will quickly realize.

There are also some wider concerns, as the media continue to change, for example that the brevity of

news reports and use of sound bites has reduced fidelity to the truth, and may contribute to a lack of

needed context for public understanding. From outside the profession, the rise of news management

contributes to the real possibility that news media may be deliberately manipulated. Selective reporting

(spiking, double standards) are very commonly alleged against newspapers, and by their nature are forms

of bias not easy to establish, or guard against.

This section does not address specifics of such matters, but issues of practical compliance, as well as

differences between professional journalists on principles.

Standards and reputation

Among the leading news organizations that voluntarily adopt and attempt to uphold the common

standards of journalism ethics described herein, adherence and general quality varies considerably. The

professionalism, reliability and public accountability of a news organization are three of its most valuable assets. An organization earns and maintains a strong reputation, in part, through a consistent

implementation of ethical standards, which influence its position with the public and within the industry