Introduction for Students

Overview

Welcome to Ad Fontes Media's CART (Content Analysis Ratings Tool). Our aim is to help you learn a specific kind of media literacy skill, which is content analysis. We provide the framework and tools to use our content analysis methodology as part of your instructor's media literacy curriculum.

CART is a software platform designed to guide you through a structured process for considering the most important factors to evaluate the overall reliability and bias of individual news articles, shows, or other pieces of news content. This process is modeled after the methodology used by Ad Fontes Media's own analysts for ranking news sources on the Media Bias Chart.

We provide the overall process and instructions for how to rate individual articles in a way that allows student analysts of any experience level to arrive at reasonable ratings that you can apply to any piece of news content you encounter. You do not need to be familiar with particular news sources in order to create ratings.

The two main things that will help you rate articles are reading comprehension skills and existing political knowledge. The more skilled and knowledgeable you are, the more advanced your level of analysis can be. However, even if you aren't confident or experienced in these areas, the platform is designed so you can still reasonably rate articles and, importantly, improve your reading comprehension skills and political knowledge by rating more articles over time.

Every week, Ad Fontes Media will select six articles about one news topic from sources across the spectrum. They will be rated by Ad Fontes Media's own analyst team and the overall scores will be posted at the end of the week. These articles will be loaded into the platform each week and will be available for you rate if your instructor chooses. If you rate these, you can compare your ratings to our own.

Your instructor also has the ability to add news content from any other source for you to rate, so you may rate different articles than the ones we select.

Using CART

You will have an analyst dashboard that shows you how many articles you have been assigned to rate. Once you click on "rate an article," a page will show up with a URL to the article and the rating tool. This rating tool is a blank version of the Media

Bias Chart with eight "sliders," four of which are aligned on the left side with the vertical "reliability" axis and four of which are aligned on the top with the horizontal "bias" axis.

You will be considering three factors for reliability, which will help you decide on an overall rating for reliability, and then three factors for bias, which will help you decide on an overall rating for bias. We have written and video instructions for how to consider each of the factors. You can move a button on each slider with your mouse to make your ratings for each factor and for the overall ratings.

The Media Bias Chart is divided into a numerical scale of 0-64 for reliability, with 0 being least reliable and 64 being most reliable, and -42 to +42 for bias, with -42 being most left-biased and +42 being most right-biased. The reliability factor sliders are divided in scales of 1-5 and are spaced apart to accurately translate your individual factor ratings to the scale on the chart.

You will then be able to review your overall reliability and bias ratings and submit them, but you will be able to go back to previously rated articles and change them if you need to. In fact, some factors will likely require you to go back and adjust ratings on previously rated articles. Your ratings and progress will be displayed on your dashboard.

Training Materials

1) User technical guide for using the platform (for students and educators)
2) Order of Rating Methodology (PDF written document)
3) How to Rate Reliability guides (PDF written description and videos) for each of:
    a. Expression
    b. Veracity
    c. Headline/Graphic
    d. Other/Overall Reliability
4) How to Rate Bias guides (PDF written description and videos) for each of:
    a. Language
    b. Political Position
    c. Comparison
    d. Other/ Overall Bias
5) Quick reference guide (PDF written description) for what analysts should consider for each factor

We hope you find that using this platform to perform content analysis of articles is a highly effective way to learn media literacy. We look forward to hearing your feedback, suggestions, and success stories.