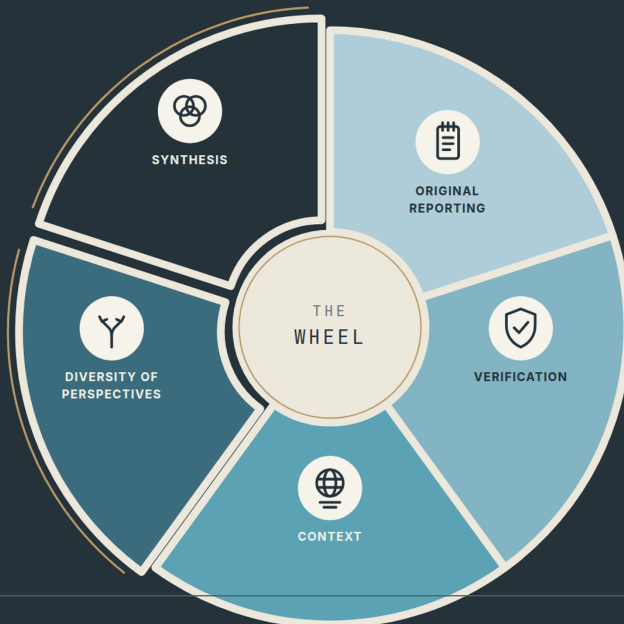


The Information Wheel

A simple way to see what a democratic information environment needs in order to support independent judgement.

Democracy does not suffer from too little information, but from an information environment that has become difficult to see, understand and contest.

Information Governance is the shared stewardship of the conditions under which public knowledge is produced, verified, preserved, made accessible, connected and corrected. It governs the environment around judgement, not judgement itself.



Why now? AI did not create the weaknesses in our information environment. It accelerates them - while also giving us new tools to repair them. The choices being made now about sources, provenance, retrieval and synthesis will shape how people understand the world.

Five functions that keep information useful

The Wheel is not a checklist for deciding what people should believe. It makes visible the functions that allow people to form their own judgements.

01 Original reporting

Something must first become known: observation, documents, data, testimony or investigation that adds genuinely new knowledge.

02 Verification

Claims must survive a test. Sources, evidence, methods and corrections should make confidence justified rather than merely persuasive.

03 Context

Facts need memory and proportion. What came before, which institutions matter, what changes, and for whom?

04 Diverse perspectives

Reality exceeds any single viewpoint. Relevant differences in experience and interpretation need to remain within reach of one another.

05 Synthesis

The pieces need connection without concealment: show what fits together, what remains uncertain and where accounts still disagree.

A UNIVERSAL EXAMPLE

Imagine a dramatic audio clip appears hours before an election. The Wheel asks: **Who first obtained it?** Has it been **authenticated**? What is the **timing and political context**? Which relevant voices or evidence are **missing**? And can a summary **connect the evidence without smoothing away uncertainty**? The value lies not in one answer, but in making the path to judgement visible.

Put the person at the centre

The purpose is not to produce agreement. It is to give people a fair opportunity to understand enough of a shared world to form, test and revise their own judgement.

That shifts the question from *Who controls information?* to *Who stewards the conditions around it?* Newsrooms contribute observation and scrutiny; archives and libraries preserve memory; researchers test methods; public institutions protect rights and access; technology companies shape discovery and synthesis; civil society and citizens contribute experience, correction and challenge. No single actor should certify the whole.

FIVE QUESTIONS ANYONE CAN USE

- 01 What is genuinely new here?
- 02 Why should I believe it?
- 03 What history, institutions and consequences give it meaning?
- 04 Who sees this differently - and what does that reveal?
- 05 Can I trace how the pieces were connected and return to the sources?

AI literacy is a condition

Transparency only helps when people can interpret it. Knowing when AI retrieved, translated, summarised or generated material - and what each use can change - is part of being able to inspect the information environment.

Stewardship, not command

Information Governance is deliberately distributed. Standards, funding, technology, regulation, professional norms and civic practice all shape the environment, while authority remains contestable and plural.

The Wheel is the framework.

Information Governance is the democratic practice.

Independent judgement is the purpose.

This is the three-page entry point. The full argument, evidence, five readings and practical agenda are available in *Five Readings of the Information Wheel* at information-governance.org.