

Read. Return. Repeat.

A Wichita Public Library Podcast

Show Notes

Season 5 Episode 3:

This is fake news featuring Christine Wenc

July 18th, 2025



In this episode

Daniel is joined by his colleague and fellow librarian Jenny Durham to interview author and public historian Christine Wenc about her new book *Funny Because It's True: How the Onion Created Modern American News Satire*.



Photo courtesy
Wisconsinbookfestival.org

About Christine Wenc

Christine Wenc was a member of The Onion's original staff from 1988 to 1990 as a UW-Madison undergrad. She has played central roles in highly regarded public history projects for Harvard University Libraries, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and the National Library of Medicine, and has received writing grants from the Awesome Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. She is also trained in midwestern prairie ecosystem restoration and likes to spend time helping to revitalize one of the rarest, most diverse, most beautiful, and most ecologically beneficial landscapes on the planet. She grew up in rural Spring Green, Wisconsin. *(biography courtesy Hachette Book Group)*

More About Christine Wenc

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christine-wenc-155b1515/>

BlueSky: [@clearwing3.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/clearwing3.bsky.social)

Books Christine Wenc

- *Funny Because It's True: How the Onion Created Modern American News Satire*

Topics discussed in this episode (with timestamps)

- About Christine and inspiration for writing the book 4:36
- Why write about the Onion now? 6:47
- The Onion's origin stories vs. the reality 11:19
- The midwestern flavor of comedy 14:41
- Her experience writing the book 20:39
- The Onion's "predictions" 23:35
- The evolution of "fake news" 28:51
- How AI has changed the media landscape 30:16
- The role of fact-checking in satire 37:11
- News satire and media literacy 39:05
- How the Onion, and news satire as a whole, is evolving 42:16
- Comedy in an age of sponsored content 51:34
- Christine's upcoming projects 57:32
- Christine's book recommendations 1:00:03

Books, authors, films & other media mentioned in this episode

- [Mr. Show \(sketch comedy series, 1995-1998\)](#)
- [Total Recall \(1990 feature film\)](#)
- [Prophets of Science Fiction \(2011-2012 documentary TV series\)](#)
- [I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson \(sketch comedy series, 2019-2023\)](#)
- [Friendship \(2024 feature film\)](#)
- *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler
- *All the Living and the Dead: From Embalmers to Executioners, an Exploration of the People Who Have Made Death Their Life's Work* by Hayley Campbell
- *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant? A Memoir* By Roz Chast
- *Moby Dick; or, the Whale* by Herman Melville
- *We Have Never Been Woke: The Cultural Contradictions of a New Elite* by Musa al-Gharbi

- *Vanishing World: A Novel* by Sayaka Murata

Relevant links to topics mentioned in this episode

[PBS Wisconsin: "In Focus with Christine Wenc: America's Finest Satire Source" \(2025, April 21st\)](#)

[Paste Magazine: "12 Great Stand-Up Comedians from the Midwest" \(2016, March 21\)](#)

[Festivaltopia: "15 Times Pop Culture Accidentally Predicted the Future" \(2025, May 23\)](#)

[Joad Cressbeckler Video: "Old, Grizzled Third-Party Candidate Threatens McCain's Base \(The Onion, 2008\)"](#)

[News Literacy Project: Teaching About AI](#)

[NPR: "How an AI-Generated Summer Reading List Got Published in Major Newspapers" \(2025, May 20\)](#)

[Prospect Magazine: "The Absurd Genius of Nathan Fielder" \(2025, July 8\)](#)

[PBS: "After judge rejects The Onion's winning auction bid, Alex Jones keeps Infowars for now" \(2024, December 11\)](#)

[Know Your Meme: "Meme 2020: How The Bloomberg Campaign Changed The Role Of Memes In Modern Politics" \(2020, February 27\)](#)

[Wired Magazine: "Social Media Replaced Zines. Now Zines Are Taking the Power Back" \(2025, June 16\)](#)

[New England Journal of Medicine: "Changes in the Place of Death in the United States" \(2019, December 11\)](#)

[Link to episode transcript](#)

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Credits

Host: Daniel Pewewardy, Jenny Durham (guest host)

Guest(s): Christine Wenc

Videographer & Editing: Kyle Holly

Producers: Jenny Durham, Ian Bailey & Daniel Pewewardy

Show Notes: Jenny Durham & Ian Bailey

Transcript: Greg Nordyke

Additional Contributors: David Garcia & Steven Kelly

Music: “Wichita Wind” by Shoeshine Blue

Special thanks to Michael Apinyakul and [Shoeshine Blue](#) for providing our theme music!

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