Day 18

Evaluating information
Wisdom of the crowd
Computer Modeling
Online Degrees - Scams

Making decisions about technology
WISDOM OF THE CROWD

- The more who contribute, the more accurate the results
- If millions participate, the results will be useful
- Daunting amount of information on the web, much of this information is not correct
- Search engines are replacing librarians, but Web sites are ranked by popularity, not by expert evaluation

WWTBAM: TV studio audiences provided the correct answer 91% of the time... but not always.

https://jackiefoxdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/millionaire-oh-no.jpg
Wisdom of the Crowd
Responsible Judgment

0 Wikipedia

0 Written by volunteers, some posts are biased and not accurate
0 Although anyone can write, most people do not
0 Those that do typically are educated experts
0 Alterations possible:

One Woman’s Mission to Rewrite Nazi History on Wikipedia

Ksenia Coffman's fellow editors have called her a vandal and a McCarthyist. She just wants them to stop glorifying fascists—and start citing better sources.

Edits to Wikipedia pages on Bell, Garner, Diallo traced to 1 Police Plaza

Department of Homeland Security warns of fake media accounts sharing premature election results

Fake Twitter accounts impersonating the Associated Press sowed disinformation online Wednesday by attempting to call election results prematurely, prompting national security officials to issue warnings about the behavior.

Screenshots of one of the accounts showed impostors appearing to call Michigan for Joe Biden. As of this write, the AP has not called Michigan for either candidate. CNN has called Michigan for Joe Biden.

CNN was unable to independently view the impersonator accounts before Twitter removed them from their platform.

AP spokesperson Patrick Maks told CNN, “These are bogus accounts not affiliated with AP.”


Nov 5, 2020
Facebook, Twitter and Google testify at Russia hearing: Live updates

By Veronica Rocha and Brian Ries, CNN
Updated 3:05 PM ET, Tue October 31, 2017

Facebook Discovers Fakes That Show Evolution of Disinformation

Researchers said the profiles, linked to the Epoch Media Group, used photos generated by artificial intelligence in a preview of an “eerie, tech-enabled future of disinformation.”

Profile pictures for “Jacobs Guillermo” and his identical twin “Duncan Gilbert.”

The network exposed by Facebook used fake profile photos generated with artificial intelligence.

Graphika/The Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab

By Davey Alba

Dec. 20, 2019
Responsible Judgment

- We can use our judgment to narrow the information stream.
- But too much narrowness can lead to extremes by **making it easy** for people to avoid seeing alternative opinions → **CONFIRMATION BIAS**

https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles?language=en
This story is truly horrifying. Guns don't belong in classrooms – period.

What they want with this red flag law is to create a tattletale society on everything, not just guns.

School district takes heat after first graders access...
A school district in Ohio is coming under criticism after it was repo...

The Real Purpose of Red Flag Laws
RUSH: What they want with this red flag law is to create a tattletal...

https://graphics.wsj.com/blue-feed-red-feed/#/guns
By last year, Facebook had clearly accomplished just that. A Pew survey in May found that 66% of American Facebook users and 44% of all US adults got their news on the site. And during the US presidential election in November, Facebook ranked behind only Fox News and CNN as the “main source” of news for voters.
Evaluating Technology

ABDICATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

● “Giving up control or authority”

● People may be willing to let computers do their thinking or decision-making

● Reliance on computer systems over human judgment may become institutionalized
Computer Models

0 Models only represent aspects of systems which we can both understand and quantify.

0 Models *always* involve assumptions. The real world involves systems of infinite complexity. To make a problem computable within a reasonable amount of time, clearly some assumptions must be made. In some instances, the assumptions required to do this may invalidate the results of the model.

0 Models are only as good as their creators. A model based on false theories or bad assertions may present data which at first glance appears correct. However, models must be examined with the same scrutiny given to any other scientific or engineering tool.

0 Simulations, like any other programs, are subject to bugs.

https://ethics.csc.ncsu.edu/old/04_97/f97/13.html
Online degree programs

0 Academic degrees can be earned by connecting to the internet and completing coursework rather than physically attending classes on campus.

0 Some degrees require blended courses: some online, some in person.

0 Good for many reasons: ... but...
Online degree programs

Marketed to less educated individuals/minimum wage workers.

Stories about government workers using these “diploma mills” to land jobs or pay raises have been popping up around the country in recent years. “We found everything from schoolteachers, school principals, head of board of education, government employees,” said Allen Ezell, a retired FBI agent.
Massachusetts AG sues ITT Tech for allegedly exploiting computer network students

“These students were exploited and pressured to enroll with the promise of great careers and high salaries, but were instead left unable to repay their loans and support their families,” AG Healey said in a statement. “Our office has a history of going after predatory for-profit schools and will not stand for students in Massachusetts being treated simply as a source of income.”

The alarming rise in for-profit college enrollment

Stephanie Riegg Cellini  ·  Monday, November 2, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has altered higher education in previously unimaginable ways. Much of the news coverage has focused on debates over campus closures and the decline in enrollment in public and nonprofit institutions. What has not received enough attention is the simultaneous increase in enrollment in for-profit institutions.

A recent report by the National Student Clearinghouse provides some of the first figures documenting college enrollment changes during the pandemic. The patterns are alarming. Undergraduate enrollment in for-profits is up 3% over last year, in stark contrast to a 9% decline in public community college enrollment.

https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/why-these-veterans-regret-their-for-profit-college-degrees-and-debt