Democracy in a Post-Truth Information Age

RESOURCES & REFERENCES GUIDE

Excerpts from Books, Websites, Online Articles and Videos

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Post-Truth, Democracy & Free Speech

Post-Truth & Democracy

Commission appoints members of the High Level Expert Group on Fake news and online disinformation, European Commission, Web post, 12 Jan 2018
The Commission has appointed 39 experts to the new High Level Group on fake news and online disinformation. ***The Group will contribute to the development of an EU-level strategy on how to tackle fake news, to be presented in spring 2018. It comprises representatives of civil society, social media, online platforms, news media organisations and academia***. The High Level Expert Group will advise the Commission on scoping the phenomenon of fake news, defining the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders, grasping the international dimension, taking stock of the positions at stake, and formulating recommendations.
https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/commission-appoints-members-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation

Data & Society to Launch Disinformation Action Lab, Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
Excerpt: Data & Society is pleased to announce generous new support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to launch the Disinformation Action Lab (DAL), a project to study and analyze propaganda and disinformation threats and develop solutions to address them. ***The lab will use research to explore issues such as: how fake news narratives propagate; how to detect coordinated social media campaigns; and how to limit adversaries who are deliberately spreading misinformation***. To understand where online manipulation is headed, it will analyze the technology and tactics being used by players at the international and domestic level. This project builds off the ongoing work of the Media Manipulation initiative at Data & Society, which examines how groups use social media and the participatory culture of the internet to spread and amplify misinformation and disinformation. Recent releases from this initiative include Lexicon of Lies and Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online.
https://datasociety.net/blog/2017/11/16/data-society-to-launch-disinformation-action-lab-supported-by-knight-foundation/

Lexicon of Lies, Caroline Jack, Data & Society, 2017 (PDF Download, 20 pp.)
Excerpt: ***Some information is problematic: it is inaccurate, misleading, inappropriately attributed, or altogether fabricated. This guide examines terms and concepts for problematic information.***
One of the challenges of describing problematic information is that many of these familiar terms do not have mutually exclusive definitions. Rather, their meanings overlap, and word choice can be a matter of perspective.
https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_LexiconofLies.pdf
https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_TeachingGuide_LexiconofLies.pdf

Media Manipulation and Disinformation, Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, Data and Society, 2017 (PDF Download, 104 pp.)
Excerpt: ***In this report, we delve into how various internet subcultures***—sometimes summarized as the "alt-right," but more accurately an amalgam of conspiracy theorists, techno-libertarians, white nationalists, Men's Rights advocates, trolls, anti-feminists, anti-immigration activists, and bored young people—leverage both the techniques of participatory culture and the affordances of social media to spread their various beliefs. ***Taking advantage of the opportunity the internet presents for collaboration, communication, and peer production, these groups target vulnerabilities in the news media ecosystem to increase the visibility of and audience for their messages.***

https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline.pdf

Democracy and Its Crisis, AC Grayling, 2017 (Book)
Anthony (AC) Grayling's 'Democracy and its Crisis' provides a concise history of the evolution of democracy before addressing the challenges currently threatening to undermine it. Among them *Grayling discusses fake news and the impact that technologies like personalized search and micro-targeted social media have had in influencing recent elections*.
https://oneworld-publications.com/democracy-and-its-crisis-hb.html

The Democracy Club, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: 'We know democracy can work better. *We have an ambitious goal to provide accurate, non-partisan information on every election and candidate in the UK, unbiased and unfiltered*. We need your help to make it happen.'
https://democracyclub.org.uk/

Disinformation & Democracy: Fighting for Facts, National Democratic institute, 2017 (6-minute video)
Short explainer video discusses disinformation campaigns around the world that aim to disrupt democratic processes, and promote polarization and extremism. IND Director for Governance Programs E. Main Bovfc describes a common post-truth phenomenon in which *'They are not trying to persuade you of the truth of one narrative, they are trying to undermine confidence by sowing lots of different narratives.'* The video also describes its 2017 Honorees which include StopFake.org in the Ukraine, Oxford Internet Institute in the UK and Rappler.com in the Philippines. Excerpt: The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than three decades.
https://www.ndi.org/
https://youtu.be/Rf1nW6hJ4bY

The Filter Bubble, Eli Pariser, 2012 (Book)
Eli Pariser's seminal work on filter bubbles. In The Filter Bubble *Pariser describes how personalized search technology promotes confirmation bias and social polarization*: 'Left to their own devices, personalization filters serve up a kind of autopropaganda, indoctrinating us with our own ideas, amplifying our desire for things that are familiar…' The book provides prescient predictions when viewed from 2017, given the experience of the UK's EU Referendum and the US General Election.
https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/181850/the-filter-bubble/

For and Against Truth, John Keane & Colin Wright, 24 Sep 2017 (1'25" video)
Presented at the 2017 Festival of Democracy, *Keane and Wright discuss and debate primary philosophical concepts related to truth and facts* including: truth as social convention, evidence claims, epistemology, philosophy of language, relativism, pluralism, populism, truth and trust. The discussion also explores post-truth phenomenon and social media, which Wright describes as the 'democratisation of epistemology'.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmrqzFPaB50

The Future of Truth and Misinformation Online, Janna Anderson and Lee Raine, Pew Research, 19 Oct 2017 (Online Report)
In October 2017 The Pew Research Center surveyed 1,116 technologists, scholars, practitioners, strategic thinkers and others asking them to choose and comment on whether they believe the information environment will improve or not improve in the next 10 years assuming changes can be introduced to reduce the spread of lies and other misinformation online. '*Experts are evenly split on*

whether the coming decade will see a reduction in false and misleading narratives online. Those forecasting improvement place their hopes in technological fixes and in societal solutions. Others think the dark side of human nature is aided more than stifled by technology.'
http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/10/19/the-future-of-truth-and-misinformation-online/

Information Disorder, Clare Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, Council of Europe Report, 27 Sep 2017 (PDF Download, 109 pp.)
This report is *an attempt to comprehensively examine information disorder and its related challenges, such as filter bubbles and echo chambers.* While the historical impact of rumours and fabricated content have been well documented, we argue that contemporary social technology means that we are witnessing something new: information pollution at a global scale; a complex web of motivations for creating, disseminating and consuming these 'polluted' messages; a myriad of content types and techniques for amplifying content; innumerable platforms hosting and reproducing this content; and breakneck speeds of communication between trusted peers.
https://firstdraftnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PREMS-162317-GBR-2018-Report-de%CC%81sinformation-1.pdf

Jonathan Heawood speaking on distinguishing between scepticism and cynicism in Propaganda, Facts and Fake News, The Holberg Debate, 2 Dec 2017
Excerpt: We know that trust has collapsed across the developed world in the last twenty years. This is not necessarily a bad thing. There is no reason why we should automatically place our trust in anyone. People and institutions should earn our trust. They should be trustworthy. *The problem is not that we have lost trust, but that we have found cynicism*. The new public sphere is in fact largely defined by a cynical attitude towards information. *Sceptics ask questions, but they are prepared to listen to the answers. Cynics believe that they already know the answers.* They already know that no-one can be trusted. No institutions, no experts, no politicians, no journalists, no NGOs, no scientists, no nobody. [p.6]... And it means *replacing our cynicism with a more constructive scepticism. We should teach ourselves to ask the right questions* in order to ensure that power is used in the public interest, rather than simply assuming that it will only ever be used for selfish or oppressive reasons. [p.9]
Excerpt from author's transcript p.6-9

The new digital age: reshaping the future of people, nations and business, Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen, 2013, p7
Extract: The spread of connectivity, particularly through Internet-enabled mobile phones, is certainly the most common and perhaps the most profound example of this shift in power, if only because of the scale. *Digital empowerment will be, for some, the first experience of empowerment in their lives, enabling them to be heard, counted and taken seriously*—all because of an inexpensive device they can carry in their pocket. As a result, authoritarian governments will find their newly connected populations more difficult to control, repress and influence, while democratic states will be forced to include many more voices (individuals, organizations and companies) in their affairs. *To be sure, governments will always find ways to use new levels of connectivity to their advantage, but because of the way current network technology is structured, it truly favors the citizens*, in ways we will explore later. So, will this transfer of power to individuals ultimately result in a safer world, or a more dangerous one? We can only wait and see. We have only begun to encounter the realities of a connected world: the good, the bad and the worrisome. The two of us have explored this question from different vantage points—one as a computer scientist and business executive and the other as a foreign-policy and national security expert—and we both know that the answer is not predetermined. *The future will be shaped by how states, citizens, companies and institutions handle their new responsibilities.*

Matthew d'Ancona on the declining value of truth in Post-Truth, 2017
Excerpt: My theme is epistemological - which is to say, related to knowledge, its nature and its transmission. Specifically, *I explore the declining value of truth as society's reserve currency, and the infectious spread of pernicious relativism disguised as legitimate scepticism*. [p.2]… We have entered a new phase of political and intellectual combat, in which democratic orthodoxies and institutions are being shaken to their foundations by a wave of ugly populism. *Rationality is threatened by emotion, diversity by nativism, liberty by a drift towards autocracy*. More than ever, the practice of politics is perceived as a zero-sum-game, rather than a contest between ideas. *Science is treated with suspicion and, sometimes, with open contempt*. [p.7-8]
Post-Truth, 2017, p.2-8 - https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1114599/post-truth/

Matthew d'Ancona on voter behaviour towards facts and opinions in Post-Truth, 2017
Excerpt: In 2010, the blogger David Roberts surveyed the latest findings of academic political science to reach similar conclusions, albeit from a different perspective. Comforting as it was to imagine that voters gathered facts, drew conclusions from those facts, formed 'issue positions' based on their conclusions and chose a political party accordingly, electoral behaviour did not conform to this ideal. In practice Roberts wrote, *they chose a party on the basis of value affiliations, adopted the opinions of the tribe, developed arguments to support those opinions and (only then) selected facts to reinforce those contentions*…
Post-Truth, 2017, p.9-10 - https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1114599/post-truth/

Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back, Matthew d'Ancona, 2017
From publisher's website: Welcome to the Post-Truth era— a time in which the art of the lie is shaking the very foundations of democracy and the world as we know it. The Brexit vote; Donald Trump's victory; the rejection of climate change science; the vilification of immigrants; all have been based on the power to evoke feelings and not facts. …In this eye-opening and timely book, Post-Truth is distinguished from a long tradition of political lies, exaggeration and spin. *What is new is not the mendacity of politicians but the public's response to it and the ability of new technologies and social media to manipulate, polarise and entrench opinion.*
https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/1114599/post-truth/

Post-Truth, Matthew d'Ancona speaking at the RSA, 24 Jul 2017 (7-minute video)
Matthew d'Ancona, renowned journalist and author of a 2017 book on Post-Truth, speaking at the RSA. d'Ancona distinguishes post-truth from a long tradition of political lies, exaggeration and spin, and *exposes how 'clandestine technologies exploit big data and social media, manipulating, polarising and entrenching opinion.'*
https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/event-videos/2017/07/matthew-dancona-on-post-truth

Post-Truth Explainer, David Clarke, 2017 (6-minute video)
Provides a short general introduction to post-truth and fake news issues. *The explainer introduces some of the primary causes and effects of post-truth, and discusses information literacy, propaganda, socialbots and the filter bubble.* The video describes how search has changed over the past two decades distinguishing four search methodologies: Relevancy, Popularity, Personality (personalized search), and Publicity (advertising-based-search).
https://youtu.be/D9SKRAS9ck0

Post-Truth Forum Knowledge Base, David Clarke, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
A work-in-progress website providing *a taxonomy of discussion topics and concepts relating to post-truth issues with links to print and online resources*.
https://www.posttruthforum.org

Post-truth, lies and fake news, Jonathan Freedland - ECS Lecture, Video published 17 Jul 2017 (1' 43" Video)
Freedland discusses the defining characteristics of post-truth and fake news. He draws attention to the idea that *in a post-truth culture one doesn't care about the truth or falsehood of a claim so long as it is effective as an instrument of persuasion*. He also points out that *in a post-truth culture recipients of information may demonstrate complicity in falsehoods because they don't care don't care about the veracity of the claims they hear*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-uFBSNBvHk

Is Social Media Killing Democracy?, Philip Howard, OII, 15 Jun 2017 (48-minute video)
This video records Philip Howard's Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Internet Studies at The Oxford Internet Institute (OII). Excerpt: *The design and implementation of social media platforms has put several advanced democracies into a kind of democratic deficit.* First, social algorithms allow fake news stories from untrustworthy sources to spread like wildfire over networks of family and friends. Second, social media algorithms provide very real structure to what political scientists often call "elective affinity" or "selective exposure". We prefer to strengthen our ties to the people and organizations we already know and like. Third, *technology companies, including Facebook and Twitter, have been given a moral pass on the normative obligations for democratic discourse that we hold journalists and civil society groups to.* Using evidence from the ERC-funded Consolidator Award on Computational Propaganda, I discuss the ways in which social media platforms have become they key infrastructures for political discourse, identify how these technological affordances have put us into a democratic deficit, and conclude with some ideas about ways in which social media platforms could be a better infrastructure for deliberative democracy.
https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/videos/is-social-media-killing-democracy-computational-propaganda-algorithms-automation-and-public-life/

Free Speech

Article 19, Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
Excerpt: ARTICLE 19 works for a world where all people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life without fear of discrimination. We do this by working on two interlocking freedoms which set the foundation for all our work: *The Freedom to Speak concerns everyone's right to express and disseminate opinions, ideas and information through any means, as well as to disagree from, and question powerholders. The Freedom to Know concerns the right to demand and receive information by power-holders for transparency good governance and sustainable development.* When either of these freedoms comes under threat, either by the failure of power-holders to adequately protect them, ARTICLE 19 speaks with one voice, through courts of law, through global and regional organisations, and through civil society wherever we are present.
https://www.article19.org

Free Speech Debate, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
The Free Speech Debate is a public forum created by Timothy Garton Ash and curated by Oxford University. It contains articles, essays and comments on free speech issues organized by topic and country. *Freedom of speech is an important concept to consider in the context of post-truth*

culture: how can we tackle the challenges of disinformation and the filter bubble, while at the same time protecting freedom of speech.
http://freespeechdebate.com/en/

Free Speech: ten principles for a connected world, Timothy Garton Ash, 2016
Excerpt: Drawing on a lifetime of writing about dictatorships and dissidents, Timothy Garton Ash offers a manifesto for global free speech in the digital age. *He argues that the way to combine freedom and diversity is to more but also better free speech. Across cultural divides we must strive to agree on how we disagree.*
http://atlantic-books.co.uk/book/free-speech/

The Index on Censorship, Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
Excerpt: Index on Censorship is a nonprofit that campaigns for and defends free expression worldwide. We publish work by censored writers and artists, promote debate, and monitor threats to free speech. We believe that everyone should be free to express themselves without fear of harm or persecution – no matter what their views. *Index's aim is to raise awareness about threats to free expression and the value of free speech as the first step to tackling censorship.*
https://www.indexoncensorship.org/

Jonathan Heawood speaking on privacy and freedom of expression in Propaganda, Facts and Fake News, The Holberg Debate, 2 Dec 2017
Excerpt: But sometimes, we think we are acting privately – when we search for information, look at websites, send emails, order books and so on. Maybe we even use a pseudonym to protect our privacy. However, *unless we are very careful and very expert, we are probably sharing highly personal data with a range of large and powerful companies*. And those companies, in turn, may well be sharing our data with advertisers or governments. It may seem strange to talk about privacy in relation to the public sphere. But we need a private sphere to complement the public sphere. *We need somewhere to go where we can think and express ourselves without the fear of being watched or targeted. We often think of George Orwell as one of the great advocates for free speech. But Orwell also shows us the importance of privacy*. The characters in Nineteen Eighty-Four can never be private. And because they can never be private, they can never truly express themselves. So, a problem for privacy is also a problem for freedom.
Excerpt from author's transcript p.6

How Russia's YouTube generation is getting its news, Sarah Rainsford, BBC News, 2 Apr 2017
Article *describes how supporters of the Russian Anti-Corruption Foundation, led by opposition activist Alexei Navalny, use YouTube to discuss topics ignored by state television*.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39456232

Propaganda & Misinformation

Foreign Propaganda & Misinformation

15 Things We Learned From the Tech Giants at the Senate Hearings, Alexis C. Madrigal, The Atlantic, 2 Nov 2017
Excerpts: During three Congressional hearings spread over two days, we heard a lot of bluster from senators and pat answers from tech-company lawyers about the role their firms played in the 2016 election. Scattered among all the questions, some new facts entered the public record. *Here we attempt to catalog the important new information we learned*. Some of the biggest disclosures came in the prepared testimony from Facebook, Twitter, and Google, as well as in the introduction from the ranking members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator Richard Burr of North Carolina and Senator Mark Warner of Virginia… (1.) Russian electoral disinformation reached 126 million people on Facebook and 20 million on Instagram. That's 146 million total. (2.) Most Russian advertising on Facebook was used to build up pages, which then distributed their content "organically." (3.) Some of the Russian-linked Facebook ads were remarkably effective, receiving response rates as high as 24 percent, in a sample of 14 ads released by the House Intelligence Committee. (4.) 3.3 million Americans directly followed one of the Russian Facebook pages. (5.) Despite that, with the evidence on hand, it would be impossible to say that the campaign swung the election. (6.) Neither Facebook nor Twitter has seen evidence that Russian pages used voter data to target ads or posts. (7.) None of the platforms were dealing with the specific Russian electoral-disinformation campaign before the election and the ensuing intelligence-community report. (8.) None of the companies have provided full-fledged support for the only legislation currently on the table, the Honest Ads Act. (9.) In at least one instance, Russian groups created dueling events that led to a real-life confrontation, in this case at an Islamic center in Houston. (10.) Facebook may not know precisely who was targeted by Russian ads, or even who was directly following all the pages that they've linked to the Internet Research Agency. (11.) Facebook does not appear to have checked whether ads created by the known Russian pages were also run by other pages or accounts. 12.) Russian trolls have continued to post content, including items related to postelection demonstrations, the Electoral College, the NFL kneeling dispute, more-general racial issues, and immigration. (13.) Google did not revoke RT's YouTube "Preferred" status because of its state links, but rather because of falling viewership. (14.) The Russian campaign ads were all paid for in rubles. (15.) Twitter says it automatically takes down 95 percent of terrorist accounts, 75 percent of them before they ever tweet.
https://www-theatlantic-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.theatlantic.com/amp/article/544730/

Announcement: RT and Sputnik Advertising, Twitter, 26 Oct 2017
Excerpts: *Twitter has made the policy decision to off-board advertising from all accounts owned by Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik, effective immediately*. This decision was based on the retrospective work we've been doing around the 2016 U.S. election and the U.S. intelligence community's conclusion that both RT and Sputnik attempted to interfere with the election on behalf of the Russian government... *Twitter has also decided to take the $1.9 million we are projected to have earned from RT global advertising since they became an advertiser in 2011, which includes the $274,100 in 2016 U.S.-based advertising* that we highlighted in our September 28 blog post, and donate those funds to support external research into the use of Twitter in civic engagement and elections, including use of malicious automation and misinformation, with an initial focus on elections and automation.
https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/company/2017/Announcement-RT-and-Sputnik-Advertising.html

Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections; US Office of the Director of National Intelligence; 6 Jan 2017 (PDF Download, 25 pp.)
'We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump. We have high confidence in these judgments… Moscow's influence campaign followed a Russian *messaging strategy that blends covert intelligence operations—such as cyber activity—with overt efforts by Russian Government agencies, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or "trolls."*
https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf

Assessing Russia Today's role as an "information weapon", Ben Nimmo, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Blog post, 8 Jan 2018
From post: Since September, the Kremlin has been up in arms over the United States' decision to register Russian state broadcaster RT (formerly "Russia Today", motto "Question more") as a "foreign agent"... Conclusion RT's behavior, as described above, corresponds with Simonyan's comments on the "information weapon", and the need for fluent English speakers to defend the Kremlin position. As such, *it subordinates journalism to one-sided reporting and selective interviewing to support the Russian government's narratives and "conduct the information war".* A number of conclusions flow from this. First, the U.S. decision to designate RT as a "foreign agent" is entirely appropriate. RT's mission is a quasi-military one, fighting the "information war" on behalf of the Russian government. Its efforts to build its audience are a part of that larger goal.
https://medium.com/dfrlab/question-that-rts-military-mission-4c4bd9f72c88

Russia weaponized Twitter to sway election, Drew Griffin (CNN), 2017 (3-minute video)
This 3-minute video provides examples of how socialbots were used as part of a foreign propaganda campaign to influence the US General Election. Excerpt: 'CNN's *Drew Griffin looks into how Russia used Twitter as a weapon in its propaganda campaign during the 2016 US election* by using fake, pro-Trump accounts to influence voters.' The report includes an interview with Sam Woolley, former Director of Research at the Computational Propaganda Project at Oxford University.
http://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/09/20/pro-trump-twitter-accounts-weaponized-russia-us-election-ebof-pkg-griffin.cnn

Social-media images shown as evidence of 'Russian trolls', BBC News, 1 Nov 2017
Excerpt: *US senators have put on show several examples of what they believe to be Russia's attempt to influence US citizens via social media.* Facebook, Twitter and Google had previously shared with congressional investigators some examples of what they suspected to be adverts and messages posted by Russia-based "troll" operatives, but the material had not previously been made public - although some instances had already been identified by the press.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-41829537

Trove of 'Russian troll' posts exposed by Congress, BBC News, 2 Nov 2017
Excerpt: *Further instances of social media posts and ads thought to be part of Russian propaganda efforts to influence the last US presidential election and divide its society have been shared with the public*. The US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released the imagery following a hearing at which Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were criticised for having underestimated the problem. The examples are a fraction of the number of posts that have been flagged as being suspicious by the tech companies themselves.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-41844025

UK political parties at risk from Russian cyber-attacks, GCHQ warns, Sameul Osborne, The Independent; 12 Mar 2017
Excerpt: 'Attacks against our democratic processes... can include attacks on Parliament, constituency offices, think tanks and pressure groups and individuals' email accounts'. The Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) has warned the leaders of Britain's political parties of the threat Russian hacking poses to democracy. *An emergency summit has been called to educate politicians on the cyber-security threat to the next election, after Kremlin spies were accused of carrying out cyber-attacks to tamper with elections in the US and Germany*.
http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/gchq-russian-hacking-cyber-attack-threat-uk-political-parties-general-election-threat-kremlin-a7625226.html

Partisan Propaganda & Misinformation

Confronting a Nightmare for Democracy, Hendrix & Caroll, 4 May 2017 (web article)
'In the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum and US presidential election, much has been written about how personal data was used to target voters with advertisements and other messages over social media. We've since learned that actors both foreign and domestic employed information operations, computational propaganda, and cyberattacks weaponizing our commercial media infrastructure. *The question at hand is whether our democratic process can endure a hyper-personalized data-driven media and propaganda environment that our founders could never have imagined.*'
https://medium.com/@profcarroll/confronting-a-nightmare-for-democracy-5333181ca675

Art of the lie; The Economist; 10 Sep 2016
This article discusses how 'Politicians have always lied,' but in the post-truth age it asks 'Does it matter if they leave the truth behind entirely?' Excerpt: *Mr Trump is the leading exponent of "post-truth" politics—a reliance on assertions that "feel true" but have no basis in fact. His brazenness is not punished, but taken as evidence of his willingness to stand up to elite power.*
https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21706525-politicians-have-always-lied-does-it-matter-if-they-leave-truth-behind-entirely-art

Propaganda, Facts and Fake News, The Holberg Debate 2017, John Pilger, Julian Assange, Jonathan Heawood, 2 Dec 2017 (2'40" video)
From Holberg Prize Website: At this year's Holberg Debate, John Pilger, Julian Assange and Jonathan Heawood will discuss the presence of propaganda in news and social media, and its democratic implications. *Is there an escalating war of information that is threatening our democracy and our ability to make informed decisions? Call it propaganda, fake news, bias or distorted facts—manipulation of information may have vast implications for people trying to make sense of the world.* While politicians and media actors accuse each other of undermining the truth and stirring up the public's emotions with questionable assertions, it is often unclear whose interests lie behind the narratives and whether or not the news are truthful descriptions.
http://www.holbergprisen.no/en/holberg-debate-2017-propaganda-facts-and-fake-news
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqEtKyuyngs

Why Fake News Doesn't Swing Elections, Tony Greenham, The RSA Blog, 13 Dec 2016
Greenham's article presents the case that "*Evidence from political psychology suggests that when contested issues become a question of personal identity, we bend the facts to suit our existing bias, so adding more 'truth' might make little difference*. The deeper political malaise is an absence of trust."

https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2016/12/why-fake-news-does-not-swing-elections

What we do and don't regulate, The Electoral Commission, Website Accessed 2018-01-11
The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK; this webpage describes they do and don't regulate.
https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/roles-and-responsibilities/our-role-as-regulator-of-political-party-finances/making-an-allegation/what-we-regulate

Computational Propaganda & Socialbots

Astroturfing, Twitter bots, amplification: Inside the online influence industry, Crofton Black and Abigail Fielding-Smith, New Statesman NSTech, 7 Dec 017
Excerpt: This investigation was conducted by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and published in partnership with NS Tech… *Fake grassroots activity on social media – also known as "astroturfing" – has become a fact of political life around the globe.* In the US, special investigator Robert Mueller is currently probing the role of Russia in a series of Facebook pages that supported Donald Trump in last year's election. In the UK, fake Tinder accounts promoted Jeremy Corbyn at the last election and automated Twitter accounts promoted both sides of the Brexit referendum the year before. Academics and thinktanks in the US, UK and EU have pored over social media feeds and mapped networks designed to spread partisan or inaccurate news... The Bureau set out to untangle some of the threads in the Gupta case, and found itself deep in the bizarre, globe-spanning and secretive world of the online influence industry.
http://tech.newstatesman.com/feature/astroturfing-twitter-bots-amplification-inside-online-influence-industry

Computational Propaganda Project, Oxford Internet Institute, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: The Computational Propaganda Research Project (COMPROP) investigates the interaction of algorithms, automation and politics. This work includes *analysis of how tools like social media bots are used to manipulate public opinion by amplifying or repressing political content, disinformation, hate speech, and junk news*. We use perspectives from organizational sociology, human computer interaction, communication, information science, and political science to interpret and analyze the evidence we are gathering. Our project is based at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford.
http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/

Propaganda bots dominate social networks in some countries; Jon Fingas, Engadget; 18 Jul 2017
Excerpt: It won't shock you to hear that governments and shady political groups will use social network bots in a bit to control the flow of information. *But just how prevalent are they? Depending on where you live, they might just dictate the social media landscape.* Oxford University researchers have published a study showing that "computational propaganda" (bots and other coordinated campaigns) is practically par for the course in some countries. In Russia, for instance, 45 percent of Twitter activity stems from "highly automated" accounts. And Ukraine is a "frontline" for just about everyone -- Russia, Ukrainian nationalists and civil society groups are all using digital propaganda systems in a bid to sway public opinion.
https://www.engadget.com/2017/07/18/propaganda-bots-dominate-social-networks-in-some-countries/

The Rise of Social Bots, Emillo Ferra, et. al., Communications of the ACM, July 2017
Article includes a 4-minute explainer video. Excerpt: Bots (short for software robots) have been around since the early days of computers. One compelling example of bots is chatbots, algorithms designed to hold a conversation with a human, as envisioned by Alan Turing in the 1950s... With every new technology comes abuse, and social media is no exception. *A second category of social bots includes malicious entities designed specifically with the purpose to harm*. These bots mislead, exploit, and manipulate social media discourse with rumors, spam, malware, misinformation, slander, or even just noise. This may result in several levels of damage to society. *For example, bots may artificially inflate support for a political candidate; such activity could endanger democracy by influencing the outcome of elections.* In fact, this kind of abuse has already been observed: during the 2010 U.S. midterm elections, social bots were employed to support some candidates and smear their opponents, injecting thousands of tweets pointing to websites with fake news.
https://cacm.acm.org/magazines/2016/7/204021-the-rise-of-social-bots/fulltext

Trump's campaign tactics, trolls strengthened Russia's election meddling, Victoria Stracqualursi and Adam Kelsey, ABC News, 30 Mar 2017
Reportage from Senate Intelligence Committee hearing, including exposition on Socialbots: During the Senate Intelligence Committee's open hearing Thursday, an expert on Russia pointed to President Donald Trump's tactics during the campaign and *the widespread emergence of internet "trolls" and "bots" as the reason why Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election was effective.*
http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/senate-committee-probe-russian-meddling-us-election-begins/story?id=46463551

Fact Checking

Bing ClaimReview Fact Check Tool, Blog post, 14 Sep 2017
[Excerpt:] *Bing is adding a new UX element to the search results, called the "Fact Check" label, to help users find fact checking information on news, and with major stories and webpages within the Bing search results.* The label may be used on both news articles and web pages that Bing has determined contain fact check information to allow users to have additional information to judge for themselves what information on the internet is trustworthy. The label may be used on a broad category of queries including news, health, science and politics. Bing may apply this label to any page that has schema.org ClaimReview markup included on the page.
https://blogs.bing.com/Webmaster-Blog/September-2017/Bing-adds-Fact-Check-label-in-SERP-to-support-the-ClaimReview-markup

Fact Check, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: FactCheck.org is a nonpartisan, nonprofit *"consumer advocate" for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics*. They monitor the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews and news releases. *Their goal is to apply the best practices of both journalism and scholarship and to increase public knowledge and understanding.*
https://www.factcheck.org/

A Field Guide to Fake News and other Information Disorders, Bounegru & Gray, Public Data Lab, 8 Jan 2018 (Free Downloadable PDF, 214pp)
Excerpt: New guide helps journalists, researchers investigate misinformation, memes and trolling. The field guide's series of visual "recipes" focuses on capturing how digital platforms shape misleading information. Recent scandals about the role of social media in key political events in the

US, UK and other European countries over the past couple of years have *__underscored the need to understand the interactions between digital platforms, misleading information and propaganda, and their influence on collective life in democracies. In response to this, the Public Data Lab and First Draft collaborated last year to develop a free, open-access guide to help students, journalists and researchers investigate misleading and viral content, memes and trolling practices online.__* https://firstdraftnews.com/field-guide-fakenews-infodisorders/

Full Fact, Website, Accessed 2018-01-12
Excerpt: Full Fact is the UK's independent factchecking charity. We don't take sides in any debate and don't support any political party or campaign. We've been quoted by politicians on all sides and corrected people on all sides. We have a cross-party Board of Trustees and safeguards in place at every level of our organisation to ensure our neutrality. *__Factchecks alone are not enough to halt the spread of misinformation. We push for corrections where necessary, and work with government departments and research institutions to improve the quality and communication of information at source.__* We also provide a factchecking toolkit to give people the tools they need to make up their own minds.
https://fullfact.org/

Google ClaimReview Fact Check Tool, Blog post, 10 Sep 2017
Excerpt: *__If you have a web page that reviews a claim made by others, you can include a ClaimReview structured data element on your web page__*. This element enables Google Search results to show a summarized version of your fact check when your page appears in search results for that claim.
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/factcheck

Poynter International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
[Excerpt:] Poynter is the home of the International Fact-Checking Network, a forum for fact-checkers worldwide. *__The IFCN was launched in September 2015, to support a booming crop of fact-checking initiatives by promoting best practices and exchanges in this field__*.
https://www.poynter.org/channels/fact-checking

Poynter IFCN fact-checkers' code of principles, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: *__This code of principles is for organizations that regularly publish nonpartisan reports on the accuracy of statements by public figures, major institutions, and other widely circulated claims of interest to society.__* It is the result of consultations among fact-checkers from around the world and offers conscientious practitioners principles to aspire to in their everyday work.
https://www.poynter.org/international-fact-checking-network-fact-checkers-code-principles

The Rise of Fact-Checking Sites, Lucas Graves and Federica Cherubini, Reuters Institute, 2016 (PDF Download, 40 pp.)
From Report: The new millennium has seen the rise and rapid global spread of what can fairly be called a new democratic institution, the independent political fact-checker. The first organisations dedicated to publicly evaluating the truth of political claims appeared in the United States in the early 2000s, anchoring what would become a staple of political reporting practised by nearly every major US news outlet. Over the past decade, meanwhile, independent fact-checkers have emerged in more than 50 countries spanning every continent. According to the most reliable global count, 113 such groups are active today. More than 90% were established since 2010; about 50 launched in the past two years alone. *__This report surveys the landscape of fact-checking outlets in Europe, a landscape which is remarkably diverse and fast-changing.__* The first regular source of political fact-checking appears to have been a blog launched by the United Kingdom's Channel 4 News in 2005, to cover a parliamentary election. In 2008 similar efforts appeared in France and the Netherlands, and

by the end of 2010 fact-checkers were active in ten countries. In all, more than 50 dedicated factchecking outlets have launched across Europe over the past decade, though roughly a third of those have closed their doors or operate only occasionally.
http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/The%2520Rise%2520of%2520Fact-Checking%2520Sites%2520in%2520Europe.pdf

Share the Facts Widget, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: *The Share the Facts widget provides a new way for readers to share fact-check articles and spread them virally across the Internet*. The compact Share the Facts box summarizes the claim being checked and the fact-checkers' conclusion in a mobile-friendly format. The widgets have a consistent look but can be customized with the fact-checkers' logos and ratings, such as Pinocchios or the Truth-O-Meter.
http://www.sharethefacts.org/

Snopes, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: The Snopes.com web site was founded by David Mikkelson, a project begun in 1994 as an expression of his interest in researching urban legends that has since grown into *the oldest and largest fact-checking site on the Internet*, one widely regarded by journalists, folklorists, and laypersons alike as one of the world's essential resources.
https://www.snopes.com/

Journalism

Combating Fake News; Jimmy Wales & Orit Kopel Google Talk, 27 Nov 2017 (58-minute video)
Interview in which Wikipedia Founder, Jimmy Wales discusses fake news and his new site, WikiTribune, which attempts to combat it. He is joined by WikiTribune co-founder and human right's activist Orit Kopel. The Q&A at 49'54" is notable: *how will WikiTribune deal with selection and opinion bias? Jimmy Wales responds that most people are "biased in ways we don't even notice" but "having a diverse community is very helpful". WikiTribune's ability to develop a scalable and diverse base of volunteer contributors may offer a unique contribution*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r01x-F4f4aw&feature=youtu.be

IMPRESS Independent Monitor for the Press, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
 [Excerpt:] *IMPRESS is a regulator designed for the future of media, building on the core principles of the past, protecting journalism, while innovating to deal with the challenges of the digital age.* We provide journalists and publishers with the protection and the support they need to do their job, hold the powerful to account, and speak with confidence and security. We provide the public with the reassurance that they can rely on the news sources that inform them, entertain them and represent their interests.
https://www.impress.press/

IPSO Independent Press Standards Organisation, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) is the independent regulator for the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK. *We hold newspapers and magazines to account for their actions, protect individual rights, uphold high standards of journalism and help to maintain freedom of expression for the press*.
https://www.ipso.co.uk/

Jonathan Heawood speaking on journalistic standards and regulation, in Propaganda, Facts and Fake News, The Holberg Debate, 2 Dec 2017

Excerpt: That is why, *since the early twentieth century, we have developed some rules for journalism.* We have said that journalism should hold the powerful to account and that it should do so by discovering and revealing the truth. We have told news owners to ensure that their journalists play by these rules. In the United States, fact-checking has been taken to the level of an art form. Antitrust laws have – until recently – prevented American broadcasters and publishers from monopolising the media in any region. In Europe, we have developed various forms of media regulation, seeking to uphold truthfulness. *Journalism unions have been formed to stand up to news owners. And the fact that we have a wide range of commercial news sources, together with public service broadcasting, has exposed audiences to a range of perspectives.* As a result, journalism has played an immensely important role in our societies. [p.4]… *But new media tells us that it should not be regulated, because it is simply a platform for ordinary people to share information and ideas. However, we can see now that new media is just as vulnerable to being captured as old media.* And it is ordinary people who pay the price for this. We have two options in response. We can sit back and wait. Wait for the search engines and platforms to regulate themselves. Wait for other companies to challenge their monopoly power. Wait for new forms of journalism to replace those of the past. I think we will be waiting for a very long time. *Or we can start to talk, carefully and cautiously, about regulation. We can dare to break the taboo that says the internet cannot be regulated.* We can agree that regulation does not mean censorship. It means helping to create a level playing field on which information and ideas of all kinds can be shared, where power can be held to account and where societies can debate the way forward.
Excerpt from author's transcript p.4-8

Quality journalism in the age of fragmentation, Lionel Barber, Editor, Financial Times, speaking at Society of Editors Annual Conference, 13 Nov 2017

Excerpts from Society of Editors website: *Social media networks are 'deeply flawed news outlets' and are influencing what news is consumed without assuming any liability for content*, the editor of the Financial Times has warned. Speaking at the Society of Editors' 'Fighting for Real News' conference in Cambridge, Lionel Barber added that while companies such as Facebook monopolised advertising revenues and provided a platform 'to create a parallel universe of alternative facts', news publishers continue to bear the risk related to accuracy and fairness. He said: "What compounds the problem is the way audiences - and therefore ad revenues - have shifted from print to digital platforms. An estimated 90 per cent of all new digital advertising goes to Google and Facebook, according to Digital Content Next, the media trade group. "Yet news publishers - especially in the UK where the libel laws are far more onerous - bear the considerable expense and risk relating to accuracy and fairness in the post-Leveson era. "Mark Thompson - formerly boss of the BBC - correctly identified the lack of a level playing field. *In professional news organisations, you can see who wrote the story. If you think it's inaccurate or biased, you know who the editor is, and the publisher. "With social media platforms and grand aggregators like Facebook and Google, "the ultimate provenance of content, and the algorithms that decide what we see and don't see, lack this clarity."*
https://www.societyofeditors.org/soe-news/13-november-2017/social-media-networks-deeply-flawed-news-outlets-says-ft-editor

State of News Media; Mitchell, Holcomb and Weisel, Pew Research Center; 15 Jun 2016 (PDF Download, 118 pp.)

This report provides *qualitative and quantitive analysis of trends in news media producers and audience consumers*.
http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/06/30143308/state-of-the-news-media-report-2016-final.pdf

WikiTribune, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
WikiTribune employs evidence-based journalism to deliver fact-checked news without advertising. [Excerpt:] ***Wikitribune is a news platform that brings journalists and a community of volunteers together.*** We want to make sure that you read fact-based articles that have a real impact in both local and global events. And that stories can be easily verified and improved.
https://www.wikitribune.com/

The Trust Project, Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
Excerpt: The Trust Project, a consortium of top news companies led by award-winning journalist Sally Lehrman, is ***developing transparency standards that help you easily assess the quality and credibility of journalism***. Our launch partners include the The Economist, The Globe and Mail, the Independent Journal Review, Mic, Italy's La Repubblica and La Stampa, and The Washington Post. Search engines and social media companies are external partners. Our Trust Indicators are based on interviews with real people who told us what they value in news and when they trust it. We're hosted by Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics in Silicon Valley.
https://thetrustproject.org/

Information Literacy

Changing patterns of library use; Helen Miller-Bakewell, Libraries Taskforce UK Gov; 10 May 2016
Except from Blog: On 28 April DCMS, published 2 reports looking at the use of libraries by adults in England: Taking Part, focus on: libraries and Taking Part: Longitudinal Report 2016. Together these reports, which are based on data from the Taking Part survey, tell us more about: who uses libraries and for what purpose the reasons that individuals start using libraries (or start going more or less frequently) user's views of the service they receive. Headline figures: ***In the year to September 2015, 34% of adults had used a public library service in the 12 months before being interviewed. This is a statistically significant decrease since data collection began in 2005/06, but is a similar proportion to 2013/14 and 2014/15.***
https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/2016/05/10/changing-patterns-of-library-use/

Facts Matter Campaign, CILIP, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
CILIP is the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in the UK. Their 2020 mission is '***To put information and library skills and professional values at the heart of a democratic, equal and prosperous society***.' The Facts Matter campaign is an information literacy project that 'champions the value of quality information and evidence for learning, to our economy, to health and healthcare, in democracy and for equal, inclusive communities.'
https://archive.cilip.org.uk/advocacy-awards/advocacy-campaigns/facts-matter

How to Spot Fake News, IFLA, Web page, Accessed 2018-01-08
Excerpt: ***Critical thinking is a key skill in media and information literacy***, and the mission of libraries is to educate and advocate its importance. Discussions about fake news has led to a new focus on media literacy more broadly, and the role of libraries and other education institutions in providing this… ***IFLA has made this infographic with eight simple steps... to discover the verifiability of a given news-piece in front of you***. ... The more we crowdsource our wisdom, the wiser the world becomes.
https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174

Jonathan Heawood speaking on distinguishing between news, advertising and propaganda, in Propaganda, Facts and Fake News, The Holberg Debate, 2 Dec 2017
Excerpt: *In the old public sphere, we could easily tell the difference between news, advertising and propaganda.* Of course, news might serve a political purpose. And propaganda might be dressed up as journalism. But the different forms of information were usually presented in different ways, in different spaces. *Now, everything flows past our eyes in an endless stream of homogenous 'content'. There are very few indicators to distinguish news from advertising from propaganda.* These forms of communication are treated as though they are of equal value. [p.5]… This means taking steps to bring the new gatekeepers into the light. To hold their algorithms accountable, just as we tried to hold the old gatekeepers accountable for what they chose to publish. It means finding new business models for journalism. If necessary, imposing taxes on the new media gatekeepers in order to build capacity within the news industry or perhaps passing new laws to incentivise public interest journalism. [p.8]
Excerpt from author's transcript p.5-8

March for Science, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
March for Science challenges pseudo-scientific claims and counter scientific thinking. Excerpt: 'The March for Science champions robustly funded and publicly communicated science as a pillar of human freedom and prosperity. We unite as a diverse, nonpartisan group to call for science that upholds the common good, and for political leaders and policymakers to enact evidence-based policies in the public interest.' In 2017 they raised public awareness by organizing public marches in more than 600 cities around the world in which over 1.3 million people participated. From the website: 'We marched because science is critical to our health, economies, food security, and safety. We marched to defend the role of science in policy and society.'
https://www.marchforscience.com/

Nobel winner: Attack on experts 'undermines science', BBN News, 27 Feb 2017
Includes 1-minute video interview with Sir Paul Nurse. Excerpt: One of the UK's leading scientists says Michael Gove's attack on experts during the EU referendum risked undermining science and scientific evidence. *Nobel prize-winning geneticist Sir Paul Nurse told BBC Newsnight experts "are being derided and pushed back".*
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39102841

Schools should teach pupils how to spot 'fake news', BBC News 18, Mar 2017
Excerpt*: Schools should teach young people about how to identify "fake news", says the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's education director*. Andreas Schleicher is planning to include questions about such "global competencies" in the next round of the influential international Pisa tests. He wants teenagers to look beyond the social media "echo chamber", where they might hear only views like their own.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39272841

Your Bias Is, Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
This website is produced by School of Thought and is intended to *help people explore and understand the various forms of bias, such as confirmation bias, groupthink, and the framing effect*. The goal of the site is to promote critical thinking – to help people learn how to think rather than what to think.
https://www.yourbias.is
https://www.schoolofthought.org/

Your Logical Fallacy Is, Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
Excerpt: A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning. Logical fallacies are like tricks or illusions of thought, and they're often very sneakily used by politicians and the media to fool people. Don't be fooled! ***This website has been designed to help you identify and call out dodgy logic wherever it may raise its ugly, incoherent head.***
https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/
https://www.schoolofthought.org/

Monetisation

Monetisation of Fake News

The Fake News Machine, Isa Soares, CNN, 2017 (13-minute video)
This short documentary explains how fake news websites can be monetized, and describes how a growth industry has emerged to generate political fake news during elections. 'Veles used to make porcelain for the whole of Yugoslavia. Now it makes fake news. ***This sleepy riverside town in Macedonia is home to dozens of website operators who churn out bogus stories designed to attract the attention of Americans. Each click adds cash to their bank accounts. The scale is industrial: Over 100 websites were tracked here during the final weeks of the 2016 U.S. election campaign***, producing fake news that mostly favored Republican candidate for President Donald Trump.
http://money.cnn.com/interactive/media/the-macedonia-story/

'Fake News City' is now pumping out add Facebook videos, Mike Wendling, BBC News, 17 Feb 2017
Excerpt: Fake news writers are producing strange, static videos that appear designed to boost pro-Donald Trump Facebook groups. It was billed as the city of fake news. After the election of Donald Trump, journalists descended on Veles in Macedonia, which hosted a disproportionate number of fake news websites. Now it appears that people in Veles have developed a new tactic to try to make their Facebook posts go viral and thus raise the popularity of false stories.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-38971987

How Fake News Works, Wired, 13 Feb 2017 (3-minute video)
This explainer video by Wired Magazine ***describes how some fake news websites work and are monetized by generating clickbait content associated with politically sponsored advertising topics***.
https://www.wired.com/video/here-s-how-fake-news-works-and-how-the-internet-can-stop-it

Montetization of Political Advertising

Bringing Transparency and Accountability to Online Political Ads, Karen Kornbluh, Council on Foreign Relations, 30 Oct 2017 (Web article)
'***The internet makes it easy for political ad buyers to obfuscate their donors and handlers. Despite the challenges, there are significant steps that Congress and social media platforms can take to improve transparency***. Since the September revelations that fake accounts linked to Russia bought $150,000 of political ads on Facebook during the 2016 campaign, discoveries of Russian activity on social media have emerged almost daily. The Russian purchases escaped notice amidst over $1.4 billion spent on political ads, much of it to promote paid advocacy posing as independent news or posts by outraged individuals. Disinformation was so prevalent during the campaign that, as Alexis Madrigal points out in The Atlantic, even the Pope talked about fake news.'

https://www.cfr.org/blog/bringing-transparency-and-accountability-online-political-ads

Conservatives buy 'dementia tax' Google ad as criticism of policy grows, Robert Booth and Rowena Mason, The Guardian, 22 May 2017
'*The Conservatives have paid for a Google advert that appears at the top of the page when users search for "dementia tax" in response to growing attacks on Theresa May's social care policy.* People using the search engine on Monday to find out about the term, coined to describe the prime minister's manifesto commitment to shake up the funding of old age care, found the top result was a paid-for link from Conservatives.com that read: "The so-called 'dementia tax' – get the real facts." Access to the top of Google's rankings is available to be bought, with the price set through digital auctions. Digital campaigning experts said the total cost was likely to be hundreds of pounds although the exact amount depends on the number of people that click through. According to Google data, interest in the term "dementia tax" rose steadily throughout Monday morning.
https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/may/22/conservatives-buy-dementia-tax-google-ad-as-criticism-of-policy-grows

Facebook's Political Advertising Services, Facebook, Website Accessed 2018-01-10
This landing page plus four linked pages describe Facebook's business services aimed at politicians and political campaign managers. It walks through a six step process: From the Website: Find your voters on Facebook; Build email lists and raise donations through always-on DR Campaigns; Influence online and offline outcomes through DR and video; Use sight, sound and motion to persuade voters; Get voters to the polls; Take your victory speech live.
https://politics.fb.com/ad-campaigns/

Google's Political Advertising Services, Google, Website Accessed 2018-01-10
This landing page describes Google's business services aimed at politicians and political campaign managers. Excerpt: Win the moments that win elections. Elections are decided over time, in countless moments that invite you to inform, inspire, and persuade voters. The more of those moments you win, the better your chances of winning on Election Day. Excluding sports, one in three voters hasn't watched live TV in the past week. With people spending more time on mobile devices, digital media has fundamentally changed how voters experience political campaigns. And the immediacy of digital media gives you countless opportunities to reach potential voters in new and meaningful ways. Build, persuade, and mobilize. From the moment voters first search for you, watch your first video, or donate to your campaign, the road to Election Day is filled with opportunities to engage and inspire like never before. Learn how digital media can help you do just that.
https://www.google.com/ads/elections/

Tim Berners-Lee calls for tighter regulation of online political advertising, Olivia Solon, The Guardian, 12 Mar 2017
Excerpt: Inventor of the worldwide web described in an open letter how it has become a sophisticated and targeted industry, drawing on huge pools of personal data. *Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the worldwide web, has called for tighter regulation of online political advertising, which he says is being used in "unethical ways"*. "We urgently need to close the 'internet blind spot' in the regulation of political campaigning," he said, writing in an open letter marking the 28th anniversary of his invention.
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/mar/11/tim-berners-lee-online-political-advertising-regulation

Three challenges for the web, according to its inventor, World Wide Web Foundation, 12/ Mar 2017
In this open letter published by the World Wide Web Foundation Sir Tim Berners-Lee discusses three disturbing trends he believes must be addressed if the web is to fulfil his vision 'of an equalising platform that benefits all of humanity': (1) *We've lost control of our personal data*; (2) *It's too easy for misinformation to spread on the web*; and (3) *Political advertising online needs transparency and understanding*.
https://webfoundation.org/2017/03/web-turns-28-letter/

Monetization of Personal Tracking Data & Micro-targeting

British courts may unlock secrets of how Trump campaign profiled US voters, Carole Cadwalladr, The Observer, 1 Oct 2017
Excerpts: Legal mechanism may help academic expose how Big Data firms like Cambridge Analytica and Facebook get their information… In what legal experts say may be a "watershed" case, *a US citizen is using British laws to try to discover how he was profiled and potentially targeted by the Trump campaign*… "It's this fascinating situation because when it became apparent that Cambridge Analytica had processed Americans' data in Britain, it suddenly opened up this window of opportunity. *In the US, Americans have almost no rights over their data whatsoever, but the data protection framework is set up in such a way that it doesn't matter where people are: it matters where the data is processed.*"
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/01/cambridge-analytica-big-data-facebook-trump-voters

Cambridge Analytica used data from Facebook and Politico to help Trump, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, The Guardian, 26 Oct 2017
Excerpt: Speech by company executive contradicts denial by Trump campaign that claimed the company used its own data and Facebook data to help the campaign. *Cambridge Analytica used its own database and voter information collected from Facebook and news publishers in its effort to help elect Donald Trump*, despite a claim by a top campaign official who has downplayed the company's role in the election.
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/26/cambridge-analytica-used-data-from-facebook-and-politico-to-help-trump

How Facebook tracks and profits from voters in a $10bn US election, Harry David and Danny Yadron, The Guardian, 28 Jan 2017
This Guardian Newspaper article from January 2016 discusses how micro-targeted messaging was used in the US election, and the increasing spend on digital platforms by political advertisers. From the Article: If you lived in north-east Iowa, the evangelical stronghold where the battle for the soul of conservative American politics will play out in person on Monday, and happened to have given Senator Ted Cruz's campaign your email address sometime in the last few months, you might find something especially appealing this weekend in your Facebook feed. You might see, amid the family photos, a menacing video of Donald Trump talking about how "my views are a little bit different than if I lived in Iowa". LIKE ON ABORTION, blares the sponsored ad from Cruz's deep-pocketed, social media-savvy digital team. And you might wonder how this campaign managed, by paying Facebook, to differentiate between Trump's "New York values" and "OURS". *Facebook, which told investors on Wednesday it was "excited about the targeting", does not let candidates track individual users. But it does now allow presidential campaigns to upload their massive email lists and voter files – which contain political habits, real names, home addresses and phone numbers – to the company's advertising network. The company will then match real-life voters with their Facebook accounts, which follow individuals as they move across congressional districts and are filled with insightful data.* The data is encrypted and not maintained by Facebook after ads run, the

company said. Acxiom, a massive data broker based in Little Rock, Arkansas, helps campaigns upload the voter info. But a campaign operative said the Texas senator has been using Facebook ads to raise money, among other things, and a Guardian analysis shows Cruz-affiliated donors are spending $10,000 per day on Facebook "placement" as the first vote nears.
https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/28/facebook-voters-us-election-ted-cruz-targeted-ads-trump

Gmail to end ad-targeting email scans, Leo Kelion, BBC News, 26 Jun 2017
Excerpt: *Google's decision to stop scanning Gmail users' emails in order to target them with personalised adverts has been given a qualified welcome by privacy campaigners.* The tech firm revealed the change in a blog at the end of last week. Google promised to make the move before the year's end to bring the consumer version of Gmail in line with its business edition. The firm had faced much criticism over the years for the scans.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-40404923

How Big Data Mines Personal Info to Craft Fake News and Manipulate Voters, Nina Burleigh, Newsweek, 6 Aug 2017
Excerpts: CEO of Cambridge Analytica Alexander Nix speaks at the 2016 Concordia Summit at the Grand Hyatt New York on September 19, 2016 in New York City. *Before the election, Nix was boasting that his company could appeal directly to voters' emotions, bypassing "cognitive roadblocks," which is a fancy term for facts.* The speaker, Alexander Nix, an Eton man, was very much among his own kind—global elites with names like Buffett, Soros, Brokaw, Pickens, Petraeus and Blair. Trouble was indeed on the way for some of the attendees at the annual summit of policymakers and philanthropists whose world order was about to be wrecked by the American election. But for Nix, chief executive officer of a company working for the Trump campaign, that mayhem was a very good thing. He didn't mention it that day, but his company, Cambridge Analytica, had been selling its services to the Trump campaign, which was building a massive database of information on Americans. *The company's capabilities included, among other things, "psychographic profiling" of the electorate.* And while Trump's win was in no way assured on that afternoon, Nix was there to give a cocky sales pitch for his cool new product. "It's my privilege to speak to you today about the power of Big Data and psychographics in the electoral process," he began. As he clicked through slides, *he explained how Cambridge Analytica can appeal directly to people's emotions, bypassing cognitive roadblocks, thanks to the oceans of data it can access on every man and woman in the country.*
http://www.newsweek.com/2017/06/16/big-data-mines-personal-info-manipulate-voters-623131.html

The Murky World of Third Party Web Tracking, Technology Review, 12 Sep 2017
Excerpts: The first global study of third party web trackers reveals a hidden ecosystem of data gathering that spreads around the world. *One of the murkiest areas of Internet commerce is the international trade of personal information gathered by certain companies who monitor our behaviour online*. This kind of third-party data gathering is ubiquitous on the web thanks to the humble "cookie"... The bigger picture is that in many parts of the world, the gathering of personal data is poorly policed, if at all. "Our observations suggest that privacy regulation, particularly in the area of cloud computing, requires more attention from the regulatory community," conclude Falahrastegar and co... The prospect of the international regulatory community gripping this nettle seems remote. But it does open the possibility that some other organisation may step in to increase transparency in this area. The first step in understanding how personal data is used is in revealing the details of what is going on.
https://www.technologyreview.com/s/530741/the-murky-world-of-third-party-web-tracking/

What Facebook Knows About You, Darragh MacIntyre BBC Panorama, 8 May 2017
Available online within the UK until May 2018. See second link below for a summary and commentary by Chris Horrie in a 13-minute audio cast. Excerpt from BBC website: Facebook is thought to know more about us than any other business in history, but what does the social network that Mark Zuckerberg built do with all of our personal information? *Reporter Darragh MacIntyre investigates how Facebook's powerful algorithms allow advertisers and politicians to target us more directly than ever before, and he questions whether the company's size and complexity now makes it impossible to regulate.*
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08qgbc3
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tPB69WBE0E

Unintended Consequences

Personalized Search & The Filter Bubble

AC Grayling on the appropriateness of personalised search for factual or political information
'Google not only profiles us on the basis of our internet searches so that it can choose which advertisements to place on the screens of our laptops, but *it also decides what we might like to know when we are in search of information – note this: it does not direct us to information, generically considered, but to information suited to our individual profile*. This is troubling enough. But in the case of political messaging such targeting is even less acceptable. Political messaging by its nature is invariably partisan, tendentious, and even propagandistic; and *if it is being fine-tuned to pull our individual 'emotional triggers' it amounts to manipulation, and manipulation of which we are unaware. That is subversion of what should be an open and transparent process.*'
AC Grayling, *Democracy and its Crisis*, 2017, p.146

DuckDuckGo, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
DuckDuckGo is an example of search engine that does not track personal data or employ targeted advertising based on personalisation filters. From the Website: 'We don't store your personal information. Our privacy policy is simple: we don't collect or share any of your personal information. We don't follow you around with ads. We don't store your search history. We therefore have nothing to sell to advertisers that track you across the internet. We don't track you in or out of private browsing mode. Other search engines track your searches even when you're in private browsing mode. We don't track you — period.'
https://duckduckgo.com/

Eli Pariser on personalisation filters in The Filter Bubble, 2017
'*Left to their own devices, personalisation filters serve up a kind of autopropaganda, indoctrinating us with our own ideas, amplifying our desire for things that are familiar*…'
Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*, 2012, p.15

Filter Bubble, Wikipedia Article, Accessed 2018-01-08
Extracted Excerpt: '*A filter bubble is a state of intellectual isolation that can result from personalized searches when a website algorithm selectively guesses what information a user would like to see* based on information about the user, such as location, past click-behavior and search history. *As a result, users become separated from information that disagrees with their viewpoints, effectively isolating them in their own cultural or ideological bubbles*.'
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filter_bubble

Filter bubbles are a serious problem with news, says Bill Gates, Quartz, 21 Feb 2017
Article includes a 1'40' video interview. Excerpts: It's easy for people to live in a "filter bubble" of media that reinforces their worldview and excludes other views, whether they consume it via Facebook, favorite news websites, or preferred TV channels. *Technology such as social media "lets you go off with like-minded people, so you're not mixing and sharing and understanding other points of view,"* said Bill Gates in a recent interview with Quartz. "It's super important. It's turned out to be more of a problem than I, or many others, would have expected."... Gates sees a problem with people not having access to accurate information when they segregate themselves into like-minded communities. "One thing that's new that is a little concerning is people seeking out things that are really not giving them the facts, and then staying in there," Gates says. "They're playing to a narrow worldview—that is a concern."

https://qz.com/913114/bill-gates-says-filter-bubbles-are-a-serious-problem-with-news/

Google, democracy and the truth about internet search, Carole Cadwalladr, The Guardian, 4 Dec 2017
In this news article Carole Cadwalladr explores how search engine algorithms can be exploited to promote extreme views through the ranking of predictive search results. Many of the specific examples of racist content have been addressed since this article was published, but the article exposes an important general consideration. Cadwalladr cites Martin Moore of King's College London saying 'ordering of search results does influence people'. Excerpts: Tech-savvy rightwingers have been able to 'game' the algorithms of internet giants and create a new reality where Hitler is a good guy, Jews are evil and… Donald Trump becomes president. Here's what you don't want to do late on a Sunday night. You do not want to type seven letters into Google. That's all I did. I typed: "a-r-e". And then "j-e-w-s". Since 2008, Google has attempted to predict what question you might be asking and offers you a choice. And this is what it did. It offered me a choice of potential questions it thought I might want to ask: "are jews a race?", "are jews white?", "are jews christians?", and finally, "are jews evil?" ***And ordering of search results does influence people, says Martin Moore, director of the Centre for the Study of Media, Communication and Power at King's College, London***, who has written at length on the impact of the big tech companies on our civic and political spheres. "There's large-scale, statistically significant research into the impact of search results on political views. And the way in which you see the results and the types of results you see on the page necessarily has an impact on your perspective." Fake news, he says, has simply "revealed a much bigger problem. These companies are so powerful and so committed to disruption. They thought they were disrupting politics but in a positive way. They hadn't thought about the downsides. These tools offer remarkable empowerment, but there's a dark side to it. It enables people to do very cynical, damaging things."
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/04/google-democracy-truth-internet-search-facebook

Google search changes tackle fake news and hate speech, BBC News, 25 Apr 2017
Excerpts: Google is changing the way its core search engine works to help stop the spread of fake news and hate speech. The changes involve different measures for ranking sites and people checking results are accurate. ***In a blog, Google said the changes should thwart attempts to abuse its algorithms that let extremists promote their content...*** Includes Analysis by Rory Cellan-Jones, BBC technology correspondent.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-39707642

Jonathan Heawood speaking on the new 'algorithmic' gatekeepers to the public sphere, in Propaganda, Facts and Fake News, The Holberg Debate, 2 Dec 2017
Excerpt: ***Access to the old public sphere was tightly controlled. Editors, owners, publishers and producers – almost all of them middle-aged white men – were the gatekeepers. They decided what went in to their newspapers and radio and TV stations and the rest of us were a largely passive audience.*** The new public sphere is apparently open to anyone with an internet connection. The old gatekeepers can only watch, as billions of us rush to share our thoughts and feelings with the world. They have become the audience, and we have become the actors. It looks like the days of the gatekeeper are over. But they are not. The new gatekeepers are no longer just middle-aged white men – although there are still quite a few of them around. ***The new gatekeepers are algorithms. Incredibly long and secret calculations which determine the content that appears in our news feeds and search results.*** Unlike the old gatekeepers, these algorithms do not stop us entering the public sphere. But ***they do decide what we see when we get there and how many people will see what we have to say. If our thoughts and feelings are not sufficiently 'optimised' for their search engines, or 'shareable' on their platforms, then the algorithm will send our content to the back of the queue,***

or the bottom of the news feed. We all know the feeling when our post on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram does not attract enough shares for our liking. It is a sad feeling. However, *if we pay the gatekeepers enough, or learn to manipulate their algorithms, we can direct audiences towards what we want them to see, whether that is real news, fake news, advertising or propaganda.* And for those who can afford it, this leads to a very happy feeling. The feeling of power. The gatekeepers have not disappeared. They have simply gone underground. They are the owners of the search engines and platforms. They are the algorithms which these companies use. And they are the advertisers, campaigners and governments which are working with these hidden gatekeepers to shape the new public sphere.
Excerpt from author's transcript p.3

Personalized Search, Wikipedia Article, Accessed 2018-01-08
Extracted Excerpt: 'Then, when a user performs a search, the search results are not only based on the relevance of each web page to the search term, but also on which websites the user (or someone else using the same browser) visited through previous search results. This… can increase the relevance of the search results for the particular user, but also has some side effects, such as informing other users of the same IP address or computer about what others have been searching for, or creating a filter bubble.'… Beginning on December 4, 2009, Personalized Search was applied to all users of Google Search, including those who are not logged into a Google Account. … In addition to customizing results based on personal behavior and interests associated with a Google Account, Google also implemented social search results in October 2009 based on people whom one knows. Operating on the assumption that one's associates share similar interests, these results would give a ranking boost to sites from within a user's "Social Circle". These two services integrated into regular results by February 2011 and expanded results by including content shared to users known through social networks. … The top factors in personalizing search results are: Location; Search History; Web History; Social Networks. … *Several concerns have been brought up regarding the feature. It decreases the likelihood of finding new information, since it biases search results towards what the user has already found. It also introduces some privacy problems*, since a user may not be aware that their search results are personalized for them, and it affects the search results of other people who use the same computer (unless they are logged in as a different user).'
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Personalized_Search

Social Media & Social Polarisation

Designing Against Misinformation, Smith, Jackson and Raj, Facebook, Blog post, 20 Dec 2017
Excerpt: *After a year of testing and learning, we're making a change to how we alert people when they see false news on Facebook.* As the designer, researcher, and content strategist driving this work, we wanted to share the process of how we got here and the challenges that come with designing against misinformation… We made it easier for people to report stories they think are false news; We partnered with independent fact-checking organizations that review articles that might be false; We reduced the distribution of articles disputed by fact-checkers; We launched a collection of features to alert people when fact-checkers have disputed an article, and to let people know if they have shared, or are about to share, false news.
https://medium.com/facebook-design/designing-against-misinformation-e5846b3aa1e2

Facebook overhauls News Feed in favor of 'meaningful social interactions', Julia Carrie Wong, The Guardian, 12 Jan 2018
Excerpts: *Mark Zuckerberg announced a major overhaul of Facebook's News Feed algorithm* that would prioritize "meaningful social interactions" over "relevant content" on Thursday, one week after he pledged to spend 2018 "making sure that time spent on Facebook is time well spent". *The*

social media platform will de-prioritize videos, photos, and posts shared by businesses and media outlets, which Zuckerberg dubbed "public content", in favor of content produced by a user's friends and family. "The balance of what's in News Feed has shifted away from the most important thing Facebook can do – help us connect with each other," Zuckerberg wrote in a Facebook post announcing the change. "We feel a responsibility to make sure our services aren't just fun to use, but also good for people's well-being." *The changes seemed designed to quiet some of the maelstrom of criticism Facebook has received in the past year, as critics have taken the company to task for cloistering users in filter bubbles, facilitating the proliferation of misinformation, allowing foreign interference in national elections, and exploiting human psychology for profit.* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jan/11/facebook-news-feed-algorithm-overhaul-mark-zuckerberg

Facebook plans major changes to news feed, Chris Baraniuk, BBC News, 12 Nov 2012
Excerpts: Facebook is to change how its news feed works, making posts from businesses, brands and media less prominent. Instead, content that sparks conversations among family and friends who use the site will be emphasised, explained chief executive Mark Zuckerberg on his page. Organisations on Facebook may see the popularity of their posts decrease as a result, the firm acknowledged. The changes will take effect over the coming weeks... *Analysis By Dave Lee, North America technology correspondent - In many ways this is Facebook getting back to its roots, making your news feed more about what your friends are creating and thinking, rather than articles they have shared.* For the first time, Mark Zuckerberg is making a major decision that goes against one of his long-held beliefs: any change to the network must have the goal of improving engagement. This move, he concedes, will likely lead to people spending less time on the site. *But after a tough 2017, Mr Zuckerberg is perhaps learning now that in the wake of the fake news scandal, and a platform brimming with tedious clickbait, not all engagement is good engagement.* Faced with the enormous task of having to do more to moderate what's happening on his network, Mr Zuckerberg may have come to the conclusion that having a news free-for-all is becoming more trouble than it's worth. For news organisations and publications, this might spell bad news: a lot of traffic comes from Facebook. With less prominence, expect some viral sites to very quickly go out of business. *The new change of course will cost Facebook money. Mr Zuckerberg warned investors at the end of last year that combating fake news would hurt the firm's bottom line. The question now is: by how much?*
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-42657621

How to Fix Facebook—Before It Fixes Us, Roger McNamee, Washington Monthly, Blog post, Jan 2018
Excerpt: Facebook, Google, and other social media platforms make their money from advertising. As with all ad-supported businesses, that means advertisers are the true customers, while audience members are the product… Whenever you log into Facebook, there are millions of posts the platform could show you. *The key to its business model is the use of algorithms, driven by individual user data, to show you stuff you're more likely to react to.* Wikipedia defines an algorithm as "a set of rules that precisely defines a sequence of operations." Algorithms appear value neutral, but the platforms' algorithms are actually designed with a specific value in mind: maximum share of attention, which optimizes profits. They do this by sucking up and analyzing your data, using it to predict what will cause you to react most strongly, and then giving you more of that… *The most important tool used by Facebook and Google to hold user attention is filter bubbles. The use of algorithms to give consumers "what they want" leads to an unending stream of posts that confirm each user's existing beliefs.* On Facebook, it's your news feed, while on Google it's your individually customized search results. The result is that everyone sees a different version of the internet tailored to create the illusion that everyone else agrees with them. *Continuous reinforcement of existing beliefs tends to entrench those beliefs more deeply, while also making them more extreme and resistant to contrary facts.* Facebook takes the concept one step further with its "groups" feature, which encourages like-minded users to congregate around shared

interests or beliefs. While this ostensibly provides a benefit to users, the larger benefit goes to advertisers, who can target audiences even more effectively.
https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/january-february-march-2018/how-to-fix-facebook-before-it-fixes-us/

How to Fix Facebook? We Asked 9 Experts, Farhad Manjoo and Kevin Roose, New York Times, 31 Oct 2017
Excerpt: Colin Stretch, the general counsel of Facebook, appeared on Tuesday before senators who are investigating how Russia spread misinformation online during the 2016 presidential campaign. Along with Google and Twitter, Facebook has been blamed for helping Russian agents influence the outcome of the election. But *the cloud over Facebook extends far beyond Russia. Critics say the company's central role in modern communication has undermined the news business, split Americans into partisan echo chambers* and "hijacked" our minds with a product designed to keep us addicted to the social network. Of course, criticism of Facebook and its founder, Mark Zuckerberg, is easy to come by; solutions aren't as clear. We asked nine technologists, academics, politicians and journalists to propose the steps they would take to improve Facebook — as a product, a company or both.
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/31/technology/how-to-fix-facebook-we-asked-9-experts.html?referer=http://m.facebook.com

Obama on social bubbles in La Times, 10 Jan 2017
In his farewell address in Chicago President Obama directly identified social media and filter bubbles as a casual factor in rising partisanship and stratification: 'For too many of us, it's become safer to retreat into our own bubbles, whether in our neighborhoods or college campuses or places of worship or our social media feeds, surrounded by people who look like us and share the same political outlook and never challenge our assumptions. *The rise of naked partisanship, increasing economic and regional stratification, the splintering of our media into a channel for every taste… we become so secure in our bubbles that we accept only information, whether true or not, that fits our opinions, instead of basing our opinions on the evidence that's out there.*'
Farewell Speech, President Barack Obama, 2017, 51-minute video with transcript:
http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-obama-farewell-speech-transcript-20170110-story.html

Is Social Media a Threat to Democracy, Anamitra Deb, Stacy Donohue and Tom Glaisyer, The Omidyar Group, 1 Oct 2017 (PDF Download, 21 pp.)
Pierre Omidyar, the founder of eBay, is a philanthropist, technologist and humanitarian. In a WorldPost opinion article (see second link below) he comments on the release of this paper with the observation: '*For all the ways this technology brings us together, the monetization and manipulation of information is swiftly tearing us apart. From foreign interference in our elections to targeted campaigns designed to confuse and divide on important social issues, groups looking for an effective way to infiltrate and influence our democracy have found generous hosts in the world of social media*. The paper itself enumerates six key issues*: Echo chambers, polarization, and hyper-partisanship; Spread of false and/or misleading information; Conversion of popularity into legitimacy; Manipulation by "populist" leaders, governments, and fringe actors; Personal data capture and targeted messaging/advertising; Disruption of the public square*. The paper is a call to action and invites collaboration.
https://www.omidyargroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Social-Media-and-Democracy-October-5-2017.pdf
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2017/10/09/pierre-omidyar-6-ways-social-media-has-become-a-direct-threat-to-democracy/?utm_term=.cd2f416640e0

Will "dark ads" on Facebook really swing the 2017 general election?, Amelia Tait, New Statesman, 10 May 2017
This article discusses micro-targeted messaging and challenges whether personal profiling (micro-targeted messaging) is as effective as high-volume blanket advertising. Excerpt: Micro-targeting and personality profiling are set to be a key part of this year's election – but are claims about their effectiveness exaggerated? Since the inauguration of Donald Trump, it has been widely understood that Facebook swayed the outcome of both the United States presidential election and the EU Referendum. Micro-targeted advertising on the site – which is used by political parties to serve highly specific adverts to highly specific groups – has revolutionised politics as we know it. During the 2015 election, the Conservatives spent £1.2m on Facebook advertising, and this year, Labour plan to spend almost the same. Like broadsheets, billboards, and broadcasts before them, Facebook adverts are a powerful tool for spreading a message to the masses. Unlike broadsheets, billboards, and broadcasts, however, Facebook advertising is at present almost entirely unregulated, leading to wide speculation about what exactly is going on. It seem likely, however, that it is money – rather than pseudo-psychological profiles – that will ultimately affect the election's outcome. The party that pours the most money into Facebook will see the greatest results, simply because more money equals more people reached. In Philip Cowley and Dennis Kavanagh's comprehensive book The British General Election of 2015, they reveal how budget differences meant Labour reached 16 million people on Facebook in their best month, compared to the Conservatives reaching 17 million each week. Ultimately, Knight-Webb hopes Who Targets Me will provide enough information to validate or debunk the widely-circulated claims about Facebook targeting. Until then, dark ads remain in the dark.
https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/june2017/2017/05/will-dark-ads-facebook-really-swing-2017-general-election

Working to Stop Misinformation and False News, Adam Mosseri, Facebook Newsroom, 6 Apr 2017
Excerpt: We know people want to see accurate information on Facebook – and so do we. False news is harmful to our community, it makes the world less informed, and it erodes trust. It's not a new phenomenon, and all of us — tech companies, media companies, newsrooms, teachers — have a responsibility to do our part in addressing it. *At Facebook, we're working to fight the spread of false news in three key areas: disrupting economic incentives because most false news is financially motivated; building new products to curb the spread of false news; and helping people make more informed decisions when they encounter false news*.
https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/04/working-to-stop-misinformation-and-false-news/

Polarisation & Extremism

Building a Stronger Britain Together, Home Office, UK Gov, 21 Nov 2016
Building a Stronger Britain Together is a UK Gov programme to help local and national community groups develop counter-extremism projects including digital projects. Excerpt: *The counter-extremism strategy encourages partnership between the government and people involved in projects that counter extremism and build stronger communities.* To help groups expand their reach and influence, the Building a Stronger Britain Together programme offers 2 forms of support through a competitive bidding process: in-kind support (such as social media training, technical assistance to help a group improve their website, or capacity building work to help a group protect more vulnerable individuals) grants: targeted funding for specific projects with demonstrable outcomes which provide a positive alternative to extremist voices You can apply for both in-kind support and grant funding.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/building-a-stronger-britain-together

Counter Extremism Project, Website, Accessed 2018-01-08
The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, international policy organization formed to combat the growing threat from extremist ideologies. Led by a renowned group of former world leaders and diplomats it combats extremism by pressuring financial and material support networks; *countering the narrative of extremists and their online recruitment; and advocating for smart laws, policies, and regulations*.
https://www.counterextremism.com/

Eight Revealing Moments from the Second Day of Russia Hearings, Issie Lapowsky, Wired, 1 Nov 2017
Excerpt: ON THEIR SECOND day in Capitol Hill, lawyers from Facebook, Twitter, and Google took a bipartisan beating as they faced tough questions about the role their platforms played in Russian attempts to divide the American electorate. Members of the Senate Intelligence Committee grilled the tech executives about their responses to Russian interference in the 2016 election, arguing that the companies are not taking seriously what Congress considers a kind of cyberwarfare. Moreover, some members said the companies' business models are built to enable the kind of disinformation campaigns Russians used to sow discord.
https://www.wired.com/story/six-revealing-moments-from-the-second-day-of-russia-hearings/?mbid=social_fb

Extreme Media and American Politics: In Defense of Extremity, J. Benjamin Taylor, 2017
Except from publisher' website: This book asks: *what are extreme television media, and are they actually bad for American politics*? Taylor explores these questions, and how these media affect political knowledge, trust, efficacy, tolerance, policy attitudes, and political behaviors. Using experiments and data from the National Annenberg Election Study, this book shows how extreme media create both positive and negative externalities in American politics. Many criticize these media because of their bombastic nature, but bombast and affect also create positive effects for some consumers. Previous research shows partisan media exacerbate polarization, and those findings are taken further on immigration policy here. However, they also increase political knowledge, increase internal efficacy, and cause their viewers to engage in informal political behaviors like political discussion and advocacy. *The findings suggest there is much to be gained from these media market entrepreneurs, and we should be wary of painting with too broad a brush about their negative effects.*
https://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9783319411828#aboutBook

Facebook grilled on Britain First page by MPs, Jane Wakefield, BBC News 19 Dec 2017
Excerpt: *The details emerged as the Home Affairs Committee grilled Facebook, Google and Twitter on what they were doing to combat hate speech.* MPs said the firms had made progress but were still not doing enough. Google promised an annual transparency report on the issue. Facebook and Twitter said they were looking at a similar course of action but did not commit to it.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-42412354

The Filter Bubble Revisited, A new study suggests online media aren't to blame for political polarization—yet, Will Oremus, Slate, 5 Apr 2017
Excerpts: In 2011, with Facebook and Google growing in influence, liberal activist and entrepreneur Eli Pariser wrote a best-selling book that coined a term: The Filter Bubble. Personalized news feeds and search results, he warned, would undermine civic discourse by steering people toward information that appeals to their preconceptions. We would search for, like, and retweet the ideas we already agreed with, and algorithms optimized for engagement would serve us more of the same—crowding out anything that might trouble our worldview... *But if filter bubbles are destroying democracy, a new study suggests they aren't doing it in quite the ways you might*

expect—or to the extent you might assume. We know that the American electorate has become more polarized in recent decades in multiple ways. But a new working paper from economists at Brown University and Stanford University, which studies the relationship between polarization and the use of the online media in American adults from 1996 to 2012, suggests the self-refining contours of your Facebook feed are not to blame. There are lots of ways to measure polarization, so the authors split the difference by combining nine different plausible metrics from the academic literature into a single index. *Their counterintuitive finding: Polarization has been driven primarily by the demographic groups that spend the least time online.*
http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2017/04/filter_bubbles_revisited_the_internet_may_not_be_driving_political_polarization.html

Social media is now a platform for propaganda and anti-democratic forces, Karissa Gall, Blog post, 4 Dec 2017
The post discusses a panel session held at the University of Copenhagen on Social Media. Panellist and Digital Intelligence Lab researcher Nick Monaco is quoted in the blog commenting on the use of smartphones and social media in Africa for *patriotic trolling, which he defined as "the use of targeted, state-sponsored online hate and harassment campaigns leveraged to silence and intimidate individuals.*" The post concludes with a Monaco quote discussing the need for transparency of social bots: "*I think if you make bots transparent and you see that bots are either harassing you or promoting a message, I think that helps people pay more attention," he said. "Insofar as people can see that this is a machine promoting a message versus a real human promoting a message.*"
https://medium.com/media-and-mass-atrocity/social-media-as-a-weapon-for-anti-democratic-forces-e17f641e5beb

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), Website, Accessed 2018-01-10
Excerpt: We are *a global counter-extremism organisation dedicated to powering new generations against hate and extremism*. For 10 years, we have responded to the rising challenge of extremist movements and the ideologies that underpin them, delivering cutting-edge programmes built from world-leading expertise in communications and technology, grassroots networks, knowledge and research, and policy advice.
https://www.isdglobal.org

UK losing online extremism battle, Frank Gardner, BBC News, 31 Mar 2017
Excerpt: Britain and other western countries are losing the battle against extremism online, research has suggested. *Extremist content on search engines is becoming ever more dominant, the Centre on Religion and Geopolitics and firm Digitalis has found.* The government's counter-radicalisation efforts appeared in only 5% of the content analysed, so high-risk keywords were going unchallenged, it found. The government said it had taken down 250,000 pieces of material since 2010. Home Secretary Amber Rudd said she wanted to tackle the issue "head-on".
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39448987