

Glossary

Algorithm

A set of steps needed to accomplish a goal. For example, a person's morning routine (i.e., getting up, making the bed, and getting ready for school or work) is an algorithm. This particular algorithm is not rigorously defined or written down. In the context of artificial intelligence and computer science, an algorithm is "a fixed series of steps that a computer performs in order to solve a problem or complete a task" (Wardle, 2018a). Social media platforms use algorithms to filter and prioritize content for individual users based on various factors, such as their viewing behavior and content preferences.

Bots

Software programs that operate social media accounts in the place of human users. Bots can create posts, comment on others' posts, and watch videos. Through these actions, they can be used to "draw attention to misleading narratives, to hijack platforms' trending lists, and to create the illusion of public discussion and support" for a particular topic or person (Wardle, 2018a; Wardle & Derakshan, 2017). Bots can also be used for beneficial purposes because they can perform repetitive or structured tasks in place of humans. For example, websites may use chatbots to help users who are facing technical problems or to help moderate a discussion forum.

Encryption

"The process of encoding data so that it can be interpreted only by intended recipients. Many popular messaging services such as WhatsApp encrypt the texts, photos, and videos sent between users" (Wardle, 2018a). While encryption can address users' privacy and security concerns, journalists can find it more difficult to combat the spread of misinformation on a platform if content is encrypted.

EXIF Viewer

A digital tool that can be used to view a specific type of image metadata called EXIF data. Uploading the image or inputting its URL into an EXIF viewer can reveal the date and time of capture, the GPS location, the camera model and settings used to capture the item, among other information.

Eyewitness Media

An image or video that was captured by a person who was physically present at the news event. Investigating a person's motivation behind capturing a piece of news content can help journalists and news consumers interpret eyewitness media more effectively.

Fact Checking

“The process of determining the truthfulness and accuracy of official, published information” (Wardle, 2018a). People who do this work professionally are called fact checkers. Fact checkers first identify the purported facts in a piece of nonfiction writing then work to verify or refute each item. Fact checkers have traditionally worked for newspapers, magazines, authors, or book publishers, but in recent decades, they are increasingly verifying political content. “There are now around 150 fact-checking organizations in the world (Funke, 2018), and many now also debunk mis- and disinformation from unofficial sources circulating online” (Wardle, 2018a).

False News

News that has been proven to be inaccurate or not based on facts, oftentimes through the process of fact checking.

Fake News

“Content that has the appearance of credible news stories, but without going through the process of verification that makes real news valuable” (Hindman & Barash, 2018). Fake news is factually false “because it skips the procedures that make real news trustworthy” (Hindman & Barash, 2018).

Geolocation

The process by which a person can identify the geographic location where a piece of media text (e.g. news image or video) was captured. Individuals can independently geolocate news content by relying on visual clues in an image or video, location tags on social media, image metadata, and search engines (Trewinnard & Bell, 2018). Online mapping services with satellite and street view imagery can be used to identify the exact coordinates of a landmark or location.

Meme

“The formal definition of the term meme, coined by biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976, is an idea or behavior that spreads person to person throughout a culture by propagating rapidly, and changing over time (Dawkins, 1976). The term is now used most frequently to describe captioned photos or GIFs that spread online, and the most effective are humorous or critical of society” (Wardle, 2018a).

Metadata

“Data about data,” or information that is attached to every digital file (e.g. digital photographs, audio recordings, video footage). Metadata can be used to search, organize, and filter information in the digital world. Although a file’s metadata can be easily changed, it can be a useful tool for verification if a user is analyzing an original file or image.

Newsfeed

An online service or feature that continuously updates to provide recent news stories. Popular social media websites often feature newsfeeds that consolidate breaking news events and widely shared news stories into one stream.

Provenance

The origin or source of a piece of news content. In the context of news verification, checking an image or video's provenance involves asking oneself whether the version you have is the original, rather than a reproduction (e.g. a copy, a screenshot, a re-posted item).

Reverse Image Search Engine

A tool that allows users to search for information online using images instead of keywords. Search engine results will show identical or similar images on the web as well as other websites that include the image; these tools can be used to help verify the provenance and potentially the source, date, and location of an image. Professional journalists oftentimes use reverse search engines as one of the first steps of the verification process.

Satire

"Writing that uses literary devices such as ridicule and irony to criticize elements of society. Satire can become misinformation if audiences misinterpret it as fact (Trewinnard & Bell, 2018). There is a known trend of disinformation agents labelling content as satire to prevent it from being flagged by fact-checkers" (Wardle, 2018a).

Scrape

A version of a media text that is copied from an original source. "Particularly newsworthy pictures or videos are often 'scraped' from the original source and re-uploaded elsewhere, and inconsistencies between a source and the content are often the first signs of a scrape. If an account that often posts about school life in California is suddenly sharing videos from Syria it is highly, highly unlikely they are the original uploader" (Reid, 2015).

Social Media

Websites and other digital platforms where users participate in online communities by discussing topics of interest, interacting with others, and creating and sharing content. Social media can facilitate the spread of both verified and unverified news and other media texts.

Sock Puppet

An online account in which a person adopts a false identity in order to mislead or manipulate other users. People use sock puppets on social media websites to inflate the number of followers other accounts have, to spread false information, to discredit others, or to bypass a

ban or suspension from a website they have previously received. Some people use the term “sock puppet” interchangeably with the term “bot” (Wardle, 2018a).

Source

The person, publication, or agency who captured a piece of news content or has information about a news event.

Timestamp

A record of the time of occurrence of a particular event. In the analog world, timestamps have been commonly used in handwritten letters and printed newspapers. Timestamps are also a common feature of digital data. All files and records created with a digital device (e.g. a computer, a smartphone, a camera) contain timestamps of the moment they were created and modified.

Verification

“The process of determining the authenticity of information posted by unofficial sources online, particularly visual media” (Mantzaris, 2015; Wardle, 2018a). Professional journalists and news consumers who verify information online often investigate the provenance, source, date, location, and motivation behind a piece of news content with the help of online and offline tools.

References

- Dawkins, R. (1976). *The selfish gene*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Funke, D. (2018, February 23). *Report: There are 149 fact-checking projects in 53 countries. That's a new high*. Retrieved from <https://www.poynter.org/news/report-there-are-149-fact-checking-projects-53-countries-thats-new-high>
- Hindman, M., & Barash, V. (2018). *Disinformation, “fake news” and influence campaigns on Twitter*. Retrieved from <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/disinformation-fake-news-and-influence-campaigns-on-twitter>
- Mantzaris, A. (2015, October 21). *Will verification kill fact-checking?* Retrieved from <https://www.poynter.org/news/will-verification-kill-fact-checking>
- Reid, A. (2015, November 2). *Verification 101: Storyful's advice for checking out material from social media, and putting it into practice*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/1st-draft/verification-101-storyful-s-advice-for-checking-out-material-from-social-media-and-putting-it-750495792876>
- Trewinnard, T., & Bell, F. (2018). *Social media verification: Assessing sources and visual content*. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/module_6.pdf
- Wardle, C. (2018a). *Information disorder: The essential glossary*. Retrieved from https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/infoDisorder_glossary.pdf
- Wardle, C. (2018b, July 9). *Information disorder, part 1: The essential glossary*. Retrieved from

<https://medium.com/1st-draft/information-disorder-part-1-the-essential-glossary-19953c544fe3>

Wardle, C., & Derakshan, H. (2017, September 27). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research/168076277c>