

Chris Gaylord, a staff writer at the CSMonitor, Steven Cohen, a writer for Information Today, and Kristina Lerman, a research associate professor at the University of Southern California, arrange a skype date. They discuss the AMA that President Obama did on Reddit; why he did it and the implications it may have.

Kristina Lerman: As you both are aware, President Obama recently did an AMA on Reddit. He was able to directly answer questions from actual people instead of political pundits or reporters. What affect might this have on how people view these sites?

Chris Gaylord: I love the idea that he tried to reach out to the internet community.

Steven Cohen: We have to realize that the users of this site span through many economic positions, from the lower class to the upper class.

Kristina Lerman: That's a good point. It could be said that Obama was trying to reach out people of different standing, but do they have anything in common besides being users of Reddit?

Steven Cohen: It's well known that most of the users, or more vocal users, are Liberal Democrats. Meaning they would already be voting for him, right?

Chris Gaylord: They may not be voting for anyone at all. Most young people don't actually vote and one of the main points of Obama's campaign is to get everyone to vote. He knows that he needs the young democrat votes.

Kristina Lerman: Well now that we know what his motive for doing the AMA was, does this mean that social media sites are valid sources for news?

Steven Cohen: I think it is. There isn't any room for political bias, maybe personal bias, but not political.

Chris Gaylord: There's also definitely a gap beginning between people who use social media for research than people who don't.

Kristina Lerman: That's a very interesting find, Chris. I did a research study that showed how friends, mostly younger in age, who use these sites to obtain information not only learn more but also share their knowledge with their peers. This news aggregation is causing legitimate information to trickle down to non-users instead of news networks deciding what people need to know.

Chris Gaylord: On sites like Reddit its the users who decide what they want to see. This is evident through their upvoting system where everyone votes up or down depending if they thought the article was informative or funny, or whatever it was attempting to accomplish.

Kristina Lerman: So in essence the news is shifting from companies think we should know, or what they want us to know, to what we actually want to see?

Steven Cohen: I think that's where the news is heading in the future.

Chris Gaylord: As do I.

Kristina Lerman: I'll have to continue my research, but I think we are on to something! Thank you for all your help today Chris and Steven.

They said their goodbyes and exchanged contact information just in case future questions needed to be answered.