

SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMIT

@ MIT



APRIL 22, 2021 | ONLINE

The Social Media Summit @ MIT (SMS @ MIT) brings together the world's leaders in social technology to examine one of the most critical and compelling issues of our time – the impact of social media on our democracies, our economies, and our public health -- with a vision to craft meaningful solutions to the social media crisis. Social media has become a dominant force for information flow in modern life – it is now a major channel for social interaction, political communication, and commercial marketing. This rise of social media has fundamentally changed the world's information landscape from a comparatively small number of information producers (e.g. news networks) to large numbers of producers, distributors, and receivers. This democratization of content production and distribution has had a profound impact on how people understand the world. Not only has the volume of information increased, but with the removal of gatekeepers on distribution, the diversity (and thus variation in quality) of the available information has also increased. This has both positive and negative impacts on individuals and society. The purpose of this event is to understand the impact of social media, revisit public policy frameworks that will best govern this impact, and craft an agenda going forward about how to achieve the promise of social media and avoid it's peril. Key topics include, Reviving Competition, Rescuing Truth, Restoring Speech, Humanizing Design, Enlightening Business Models, Ensuring Transparency, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, Antitrust, Freedom of Speech, Political Polarization, the Rise of the Splinternet and the Integrity of our Elections.

9:15 AM WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS



SINAN ARAL
DIRECTOR, MIT IDE
AUTHOR, THE HYPE MACHINE



ANDREW MCAFEE
CO-DIRECTOR, MIT IDE
AUTHOR, MORE FROM LESS



DAVID C. SCHMITTLEIN
JOHN C HEAD III DEAN & PROFESSOR
MIT SLOAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

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9:30 AM SESSION 1: RESCUING TRUTH



CAMILLE FRANÇOIS
CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER
GRAPHIKA, INC.



ALI VELSHI
HOST, VELSHI; BUSINESS
CORRESPONDENT, NBC



MARIA RESSA
CEO
RAPPLER



CLINT WATTS
DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH FELLOW
FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Rescuing truth requires thoughtful discourse on fake news--its genesis, propagation, consequences and solutions. Current events push us towards threats to our democracies, our economies and our public health during the Coronavirus pandemic and beyond. This session will engage some of the world's top experts on the spread of falsity, conspiracy cults and social media manipulation, both foreign and domestic, to explore real solutions to the abuse of new communication technologies from cyberwarfare to online harassment and from conspiracy theories to political and economic terrorism.

10:45 AM SESSION 2: ENSURING TRANSPARENCY



CAROLE CADWALLADR
AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST
THE OBSERVER



JOHN MARKOFF
AFFILIATE FELLOW
STANFORD HAI



KATE STARBIRD
PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



NATE PERSILY
PROFESSOR
STANFORD LAW SCHOOL

A critical step toward any solution to our social media crisis is transparency. To address the dramatic harms social media is creating, we need to understand more deeply how it works. We need platform transparency, algorithmic transparency, and choice. We need meaningful industry-academic partnerships to dig into the inner workings of social media. But, no one will ever forget that the Cambridge Analytica scandal began with Facebook sharing data with an academic institution. How can we thread the needle of this Transparency Paradox--our simultaneous need to make social platforms more open and more secure and private at the same time? What are the right models for achieving transparency safely and securely, and what tradeoffs do we face in designing and executing these models? How can we achieve meaningful oversight and auditing of the inner workings of social media, and is the Facebook Oversight Board a step in the right direction? In this session we'll discuss how to safely open this black box so we can shine a much needed light under the hood of social media.

12:00 PM FIRESIDE CHAT



NICK CLEGG
VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL
AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS
FACEBOOK



SINAN ARAL
DIRECTOR, MIT IDE
AUTHOR, THE HYPE MACHINE

1:00 PM SESSION 3: REVIVING COMPETITION



JOSHUA GANS
PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



MARIETJE SCHAAKE
PRESIDENT; CYBER PEACE INSTITUTE
INTERNATIONAL POLICY DIRECTOR;
STANFORD'S CYBER POLICY CENTER



ALBERT WENGER
MANAGING PARTNER
UNION SQUARE VENTURES



ZEPHYR TEACHOUT
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
FORDHAM LAW SCHOOL

Without competition, social media platforms have little incentive to solve the crises they have wrought. But, what are the best ways to revive competition in a social media economy governed by network effects? How can we address the political influence of the largest social media platforms? In this session, our panelists will bring to bear their perspectives from law, public policy, economics and technology ventures to debate the most popular options, including breaking up big tech, antitrust enforcement, interoperability legislation, data and social network portability, and forward looking merger oversight.

2:15 PM SESSION 4: HUMANIZING DESIGN



RENÉE GOSLINE
PRINCIPAL RESEARCH SCIENTIST
MIT SLOAN



ROGER MCNAMEE
FOUNDING PARTNER
ELEVATION PARTNERS



SAFIYA NOBLE
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR/CO-FOUNDER
CENTER FOR CRITICAL INTERNET
INQUIRY AT UCLA



ELI PARISER
CO-FOUNDER
UPWORTHY

At the heart of the social media crisis is a problem of thoughtful design. The way social media platforms--and the algorithms that run them--are designed has an outsized impact on the outcomes we see in society: from their perpetuation of bias, to their algorithmic amplification of hateful and harmful speech, to their role in polarizing our society. In this session, we'll tackle the critical question of how we must humanize social media's design. How can the social platforms and their algorithms achieve the promise of social media while avoiding its peril? Should social platforms be held responsible for the safety of their products, like most other industries? What changes are necessary to reduce the algorithmic amplification of harm and hate, and to increase the spread of opportunity, health, and meaningful human connection?

3:30 PM SESSION 5: ENLIGHTENING BUSINESS MODELS



RANA EL KALIOUBY
CEO
AFFECTIVA



SCOTT GALLOWAY
PROFESSOR
NYU STERN SCHOOL



GUY KAWASAKI
CHIEF EVANGELIST, CANVA;
HOST, THE REMARKABLE
PEOPLE PODCAST



HILARY MASON
CO-FOUNDER, HIDDEN DOOR;
FOUNDER, FAST FORWARD LABS

The social media business model--built on top of the attention economy--is unbelievably effective. But, is it good for us? Does the attention economy inevitably lead to the spread of the least common denominators like falsity, hate and polarization? Or can it be adjusted to align shareholder value with society's values? How did we pick popularity as the human yardstick and can we re-engineer the social media economy toward more productive goals? Would a subscription model point us toward the promise of social media and away from its peril or would subscription services simply exacerbate inequality? Are there alternatives to short term engagement as the metric running the social economy? How can we prioritize authenticity and value and align them with long run shareholder value in the social economy?

4:45 PM SESSION 6: RESTORING SPEECH



RENÉE DIRESTA
RESEARCH MANAGER, STANFORD
INTERNET OBSERVATORY



JEFF KOSSEFF
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
US NAVAL ACADEMY



YAËL EISENSTAT
FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY FELLOW, THE
BERGGRUEN INSTITUTE, AND
RESEARCHER-IN-RESIDENCE, BETALAB



RICHARD STENDEL
FORMER UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR
PUBLIC AFFAIRS & DIPLOMACY; FORMER
MANAGING EDITOR OF TIME MAGAZINE

The First Amendment right to free speech in the US is a cornerstone of our democracy and the marketplace of ideas that spurs innovation. But, one cannot yell "fire" in a crowded theatre and most would agree that incitements to violence represent speech that should be moderated. But how do we draw the lines between free and harmful speech in the age of social media? And who should draw those lines? Should we repeal or reform Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, and what effect would that have on speech? How can we curtail the livestreaming of mass murders like the one in Christchurch, New Zealand without inadvertently quelling or chilling speech? This session will go beyond the lament of the negative, and hopefully lead us to a discourse on the directions law and policy can take to restore speech while minimizing its harmful effects.

6:00 PM ADJOURN

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