

YouTube Executives Ignored Warnings, Letting Toxic Videos Run Rampant | Bloomberg

By Mark Bergen

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A year ago, Susan Wojcicki was on stage to defend YouTube. Her company, hammered for months for fueling falsehoods online, was reeling from another flare-up involving a conspiracy theory video about the Parkland, Florida high school shooting that suggested the victims were “crisis actors.”

Wojcicki, YouTube’s chief executive officer, is a reluctant public ambassador, but she was in Austin at the South by Southwest conference to unveil a solution that she hoped would help quell conspiracy theories: a tiny text box from websites like Wikipedia that would sit below videos that questioned well-established facts like the [moon landing](#) and link viewers to the truth.

Wojcicki’s media behemoth, bent on overtaking television, is estimated to rake in sales of more than \$16 billion a year. But on that day, Wojcicki compared her video site to a different kind of institution. “We’re really more like a library,” she said, staking out a familiar position as a defender of free speech. “There have always been controversies, if you look back at libraries.” Since Wojcicki took the stage, prominent conspiracy theories on the platform—including one on child vaccinations; another tying Hillary Clinton to a Satanic cult—have drawn the ire of lawmakers eager to regulate technology companies. And YouTube is, a year later, even more associated with the darker parts of the web.

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