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News Item

‘Disinformation’ Is The Word Of The Year — And A Sign Of What’s To Come | NPR

By Geoff Nunberg
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> As always, this year’s word of the year candidates came from all over. There were the viral memes like “OK, boomer” and “weird flex, but OK,” but they won’t endure any longer than earlier years’ candidates like FOMO and “manbun.” “Quid pro quo” had a moment, but the jury’s still out on that one. And a surge in dictionary lookups led Merriam-Webster to pick nonbinary “they.”
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> My choice of “disinformation” needs some explaining. It isn’t a new word — just one of the family of names we give to the malignancies that contaminate the public discourse, along with “propaganda,” and in particular “misinformation” and “fake news.” Each of those last two was chosen as word of the year by some dictionary or organization in 2017.
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> But over the past couple of years “disinformation” has been on a tear — it’s 10 times as common in media headlines as it was five years ago, to the point where it’s nudged its siblings aside. That rise suggests a basic shift in focus: What most troubles us now isn’t just the plague of deceptive information on the Internet, but the organized campaigns that are spreading the infection.
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