

Where Does All That Online Disinformation Come From? Experts Say You Get What You Search For. | WFSU News

By Tom Flanigan

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The rise of the Internet has made the knowledge of the world readily available to pretty much everyone. But those knowledge seekers also need to be aware of how they're searching for information. Here's Al Tompkins, a senior broadcast and online faculty member for the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, a non-profit journalism and research organization based in St. Petersburg, Florida.

"What exactly are you Googling? If for example you Google: 'Coronavirus facts,' you're going to get factual links to things like the CDC and the World Health Organization and Johns Hopkins. But if you Google: 'Coronavirus truth,' you're going to get a very different return because it's going to assume you want to know about conspiracy theories and things that may not be factual or statistical, but instead theoretical."

Have you every noticed how, if you look online for information about a specific product - say a new washing machine - that suddenly you're seeing a tidal wave of pop-up ads for washing machines? Tompkins said that's just the way the Internet and social media platforms work.

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