

# A Safe Harbor for Platform Research | Knight First Amendment Institute

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January 20, 2022

Social media platforms influence public discourse in profound ways. Billions of users worldwide and hundreds of millions in the United States rely on the platforms to connect with each other as well as with businesses, advocacy organizations, and governments. They depend on the platforms for news, including news about politics, political candidates, and elections. Through their business practices, policies, and design decisions, the platforms influence how we engage with one another and with the communities around us, with far-reaching implications for society. Yet even the social media companies themselves do not fully understand this influence. It is vital that the public understand better how the platforms are shaping public discourse—what relationships they encourage or discourage, what information they amplify or suppress, and what communities they bring together or pull apart.

Digital journalism and research are crucial to this process. Many of the most important stories written about the social media platforms have relied on basic tools of digital investigation.

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