

Facebook's Most Shared Story of 2019 is a 119-word Local Crime Brief from Central Texas | Slate

By Will Oremus

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On an otherwise ordinary Sunday in late January, a 32-year-old web editor for a chain of local radio stations in Central Texas ran across a news item that he found interesting. Ten minutes later, he had written and published what would become Facebook's most-shared story of 2019 so far.

The story has nothing to do with Donald Trump, celebrities, teens in MAGA hats, or the Democratic primary candidates. It's a 119-word local crime brief about a wanted suspect, and the man who wrote it never intended for it to reach a national audience, let alone amass more than 800,000 Facebook shares in the six weeks following its publication—nearly twice as many as any other piece of English-language content this year.

Exactly how this news stub went mega-viral is a mystery no one has quite solved, though there are clues, starting with its alarming yet geographically ambiguous headline: "[Suspected Human Trafficker, Child Predator May Be in Our Area](#)." At a time when fortunes can be built and lost on Facebook traffic, the story's wild success might seem like a bizarre accident, a glitch in the system. But it also suggests that, for all of Facebook's efforts to improve its news feed over the years, the social network remains as capricious and opaque an information source as ever.

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Source: [Facebook's most shared story of 2019 is a 119-word local crime brief from Central Texas](#).