News Item

The Future of Platform Power: Quarantining Misinformation | Project Muse

By Robert Faris and Joan Donovan

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> Far removed from the techno-optimism inspired a decade ago by prodemocracy movements using digital tools to organize, today's discussions are mired in a gloomier—and more realistic—place. Scholars and pundits now frequently argue that the internet, in its current form, is a threat to democracy. Much of their critique takes aim at the consolidation of power in the hands of large internet platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google, and what these companies do—and do not do—with this power.
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> The eminent political scientist Francis Fukuyama lends his voice to the coalition of the concerned in a recent article in these pages, summarizing the work of a Stanford-based group of scholars who examined the scale, scope, and power of platforms, the potential for their abuse, and possible remedies. Arguing that the key threat to democracy is the platforms' potential to sway election outcomes, he proposes a strategy to reduce platform power: Require companies to open their platforms to outside content-moderation services called "middleware," thereby giving users more options to curate the material they see online.
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