

# The scientific process, and how to handle misinformation | Columbia Journalism Review

By Mathew Ingram

January 27, 2022

After Donald Trump was elected, in 2016, [misinformation](#)—and its more toxic cousin, disinformation—began to feel like an increasingly urgent social and political emergency. Concerns about [Russian trolls meddling in American elections](#) were soon joined by hoaxes and conspiracy theories involving covid-19. Even those who could agree on how to define mis- and disinformation, however, debated what to do about the information itself: Should Facebook and Twitter [remove “fake news” and disinformation](#), especially about something as critical as a pandemic? Should they “deplatform” repeated disinfo spreaders such as Trump and his ilk, so as not to [infect others with their dangerous delusions](#)? Should federal regulations require the platforms to take such steps?

After coming under pressure, both from the general public and [from President Biden](#) and members of Congress, Facebook and Twitter—and, to a lesser extent, YouTube—started actively removing such content. They began by [banning the accounts of people such as Trump and Alex Jones](#), and later started blocking or “down-ranking” covid-related misinformation that appeared to be [deliberately harmful](#). Is this the best way to handle the problem of misinformation? Some argue that it is, and that “deplatforming” people like Trump—or even blocking entire platforms, [such as the right-wing Twitter clone Parler](#)—works, in the sense that it quiets serial disinformers and removes misleading material. But not everyone agrees.

[...]

Source: [The scientific process, and how to handle misinformation | Columbia Journalism Review](#)