News Item

# We need to know more about political ads. But can transparency be a trap? | Nieman Journalism Lab

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> As misinformation researchers, we spend a lot of time thinking about online advertising. We dig through ad libraries, monitor platforms' announcements, and publish investigations into how disinformation agents are bending the rules.
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> We rely on social media platforms to give us information to do this. But the experience of working within platforms' parameters has left us with a question: Can transparency be a trap?
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> In 2017, Facebook announced it was building a searchable archive of U.S. federal election–related ads that would include some spending and targeting data. Various iterations culminated in the Ad Library, which set the standard for ad transparency. Later, Google also began sharing some information about political ads with researchers. Snapchat did the same, and Twitter eventually opted to get rid of political advertising altogether.
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> By setting policy on it, social platforms have demonstrated they know transparency matters when it comes to political advertising. But they're also able to control the terms of that transparency. Here are eight big questions that arose when we began scrutinizing the current landscape for advertising transparency.
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