Special Issue of Postdigital Science and Education
Call for Papers
Lies, Bullshit and Fake News Online: Should We Be Worried?

Since the election of Donald Trump in 2016, and the alleged interference of Russia in that election, there have been increasing concerns that fake news in online platforms is undermining the legitimacy of the press, the democratic process, and the authority of sources such as science, the social sciences and qualified experts. The global reach of Google, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms has shown that they can be used to spread fake and misleading news quickly and seemingly without control. In addition to their power and reach, these platforms operate, and indeed thrive, in what seems to be an increasingly balkanised media eco-system where networks of users will predominantly access and consume information that conforms to their existing worldviews. Conflicting positions, even if relevant and authoritative, are suppressed, discredited or overlooked.

Should we be concerned? It is tempting to think that with the intense reporting on lies, bullshit and fake news, publics everywhere are facing a crisis of honesty and trust through calculated onslaughts on these values. However, the dissemination of false or misleading news, negative campaigns about disfavoured people or groups, and lies, scams and bullshit, is hardly new. Propaganda is an ancient art that has been disseminated through state-controlled media in modern times, through the theatre, games and festivals in ancient times, and through pamphlets and handwritten books before we used modern machinery to communicate on a mass scale. Propaganda was as much used in the French Revolution as it was in the Second World War and the Vietnam War, and both communism and fascism used revolutionary propaganda with some ferocity in the 20th century.

But perhaps there is something that marks out our times as having surpassed practices of deliberate misinformation in other periods. With most people now using online platforms, including social media feeds, as their main source of news, views, and evidence, we are led to ask: what is the difference between a lie, bullshit and a fake news story? Is it defensible to lie, bullshit or spread fake stories? Whom can we trust? How do online users distinguish the fake from the real, the truthful from the dishonest, and an authority from a propagandist?

For this special issue we are looking for papers from across a range of disciplines that focus on questions and conceptions of:

- Lies, fakery and bullshit in modern social media
- Epistemic trust and authority online
- Epistemologies of ignorance – how these are created, produced and sustained
- The role of digital and information literacies, and linguistic framing
- The role of platforms in the dissemination of fake news, hoaxes and misinformation
- The role of education and online platforms in addressing these issues and improving the health of public conversations.

More information in Guest Editors' article Lies, Bullshit and Fake News: Some Epistemological Concerns.

Submissions
For further information and authors' guidelines see Postdigital Science and Education.

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Important Dates
1 March 2019 – Deadline for extended abstracts (700-800 words) (submitted by e-mail to Guest Editors)
15 May 2019 – Deadline for full papers (submitted through online submission system)
1 July 2019 – Deadline for reviewer feedback
1 October 2019 – Final deadline for revised papers
Accepted articles are immediately published as Online First.
The Special Issue will be published in December 2019.