Assigned article: "Swinging the Vote?"

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1. **What are the inputs and outputs of the algorithm/automated decision system that you read about?**

The main inputs of the Gmail tab curation algorithm, as put by Google's communication manager Katie Wattie, are "users' preferences and actions." Some of these preferences and actions include: which emails you open, which emails you reply to, keywords in emails you usually read, and lastly, which emails you delete, star, and/or archive.

The main outputs of the Gmail tab curation algorithm are automatically adjusted primary, promotional, and social tabs that match the aforementioned user preferences.

**How does your automated decision system work? Is there a learning algorithm/meta-algorithm involved?**

The automated decision system works by learning from users' preferences, and automatically adjusts what mail goes into the primary, promotional, social, and spam tabs to match these preferences.

Although it isn't explicitly stated that there is a meta-algorithm involved, it is fairly obvious that a learning algorithm is involved, as the Gmail algorithm has to learn from the actions and habits of a user in order to create the most accurate tab curation formula for each individual user.

* **What potential issues do the authors of your article raise? Are there other potential harms that you can think of?**

The main issue that the author emphasizes throughout the article is that Gmail’s curation algorithm fails to sort emails in a logical and consistent way, and this in turn impacts things such as political candidates, petitions, campaigns, and even emails corresponding to changing passwords. These inconsistencies in putting important mail in appropriate tabs has led to many political campaigns and causes losing out on vital donations. As Kenneth Pennington, a consultant who worked on Beto O’Rourke’s digital campaign, puts it, “The fact that Gmail has so much control over our democracy and what happens and who raises money is frightening.”

The author also notes an even bigger issue with the sorting algorithm; the existence of the primary and social tab allows for the competition of advertisers to get top placement in these tabs. The main concern is that Gmail will turn into a “Facebook-style” feed in which you have to pay in order to get placement into the inbox. And although Katie Wattie says this type of style is “not on the roadmap for Gmail,” many people fear that this type of style is already being implemented.

* **Do the authors of your article propose any remedies? What are your suggestions**

The author doesn't provide any remedies in regards to how to ensure certain emails end up in which tab/how to make tab curation more effective. However, since Gmail enables the tabs by default, Sebastien does offer the solution of disabling the social and promotional tabs to make sure the curated tabs don't mess up an individual's mail feed. It turns out, many individuals follow this advice as based on a 2016 survey, only 34 percent of the respondents used the curation tabs.

* **Was anything unclear in your article? Is there anything you wish the authors would have done differently?**

None of the information presented in the article was confusing or unclear, however, the author of the article didn’t mention any avenues for how to hold Google accountable, or any ideas on how to make the algorithm more effective as a whole. Instead, the author simply warned us about the dangers of this algorithm and left it at that. With that said, I wish the author would’ve tied the potential harms brought up in the article with some potential remedies to the flawed system/different options to explore other than Gmail if no current remedies exist.