

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter send home thousands of human moderators

Early this month, most Facebook employees packed up and readied to work from home as the novel coronavirus spread around the world. Despite a company-wide mandate, however, the social networking giant had not figured out how to conduct its most sensitive work remotely: removing pornography, terrorism, hate speech and other unwanted content from across its site.

The people who do that sensitive work — nearly 15, 000 contractors at 20 sites globally — continued to come to the office until March 16, when public pressure, internal protests and quarantine measures around the world pushed Facebook to make a drastic move to shutter its moderation offices.

While Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other companies have long **touted** artificial intelligence and algorithms as the future of policing problematic content, they've more recently acknowledged that humans are the most important line of defense.

tout 兜售; 招徕

touted 被吹捧的

These social media companies have faced significant challenges to policing content, from the live video posted during the Christchurch, New Zealand, shootings last year to disinformation campaigns by Russian trolls during the 2016 presidential election.

That pressure is heightened as disinformation regarding the novel coronavirus surges. On Facebook-owned WhatsApp, chat groups are spreading unverified information about flights, hotels and schools in connection with the virus, as well as misinformation about potential government crackdowns and how the disease is spreading.

"They haven't made enough **leaps and bounds** in artificial intelligence to take away the best tool we have: human intelligence to do the **discernment**," said Mary Gray, senior principal researcher at Microsoft Research.

leaps and bounds 跳跃; 跨越式发展

discernment 识别; 明辨

"This is a mess."