Week 4: You are the product: giant internet companies and how they threaten privacy

Real time lecture: June 27, 8:30 am Pacific/11:30 am Eastern

Overview

The internet is no doubt a democratizing force, amplifying the voices of individuals and communities that politically and economically disenfranchised and helping give rise to new media that propels new economic opportunities, creativity, and new social movements. It's how we communicate with loved ones, find jobs, and know what's happening around the world and in our communities. But for all its promise and all that we've come to depend on it for, the internet is under the control of a small handful of private companies, accountable to none but their shareholders. These few private companies, like Google and Facebook, shape the internet in ways that serve their bottom line—largely offering a "free" service in exchange for collecting vast amounts of data on their users. Business as usual relies that trove of user data, usually exploited

to send hyper-targeted and often manipulative advertisements to people based on their race, age, gender, religion, income level, and sexual orientation, and much of it is obtained without meaningful consent. The recent scandal with Facebook and Trump's voter targeting firm, Cambridge Analytica, is a prime example of how largely unregulated corporations online, can abuse private user data sway elections and reshape the world. This week's guest lecturer April Glaser, a journalist at Slate, will tell us more about how the economics of corporate data collection, what is and isn't happening politically to rein powerful internet giants in, and the myriad harms that data profiling has long had on vulnerable and marginalized communities online.

Learning objectives
- Understand ethical/privacy issues of major tech and internet companies
- Learn about the regulatory and political environment—and the lack thereof
- Discuss harm reduction strategies for using their platforms
- Craft strategies to incorporate this information into library instruction*

Readings

[note: I had a hard time narrowing down readings for this week, so I'm just sharing them ALL with you. Don't feel like you have to read every single one. Read/skim for an hour or two, choose the ones that look most interesting to you. This is a big topic!]

- The Cambridge Analytica Scandal Is What Facebook-Powered Election Cheating Looks Like:
  https://slate.com/technology/2018/03/the-cambridge-analytica-scandal-is-what-facebook-powered-election-cheating-looks-like.html
- Facebook (Still) Letting Housing Advertisers Exclude Users by Race:
  https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-advertising-discrimination-housing-race-sex-national-origin

- Facebook Enabled Advertisers to Reach "Jew Haters": https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-enabled-advertisers-to-reach-jew-hater
- 'Pro-Beyoncé' vs. 'Anti-Beyoncé': 3,500 Facebook ads show the scale of Russian manipulation: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/05/10/here-are-the-3400-facebook-ads-purchased-by-russias-online-trolls-during-the-2016-election/?utm_term=.abb96101981f
- Digital Inclusion and Data Profiling (highly recommended): http://firstmonday.org/article/view/3821/3199#11
- How Facebook Outs Sex Workers: https://gizmodo.com/how-facebook-outs-sex-workers-1818861596
- Facebook recommended that this psychiatrist's patients friend each other: https://splinternews.com/facebook-recommended-that-this-psychiatrists-patients-f-1793861472
- We read every one of the 3,517 Facebook ads bought by Russians. Here's what we found: https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/05/11/what-we-found-facebook-ads-russians-accused-election-meddling/602319002/
- Google Was Right to Fire the Memo Writer: http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2017/08/why_did_a_google_engineer_feel_empowered_to_share_his_sexist_memo.html
- What will an Internet Without Net Neutrality Be Like?: http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2017/12/what_the_internet_is_like_in_countries_without_net_neutrality.html
- Facebook's Secret Censorship Rules Protect White Men From Hate Speech But Not Black Children: https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-hate-speech-censorship-internal-documents-algorithms
- Facebook wants you to vote on Tuesday. Here's how it messed with your feed in 2012: https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/10/can-voting-facebook-button-improve-voter-turnout/

More Facebook/Cambridge Analytica pieces

- "I made Steve Bannon's psychological warfare tool": meet the data war whistleblower: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump
- Cambridge Analytica execs boast of role in getting Trump elected: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/20/cambridge-analytica-execs-boast-of-role-in-getting-trump-elected
- The watchdogs that didn't bark: https://slate.com/technology/2018/04/why-arent-privacy-groups-fighting-to-regulate-facebook.html

- "It's your data":
  https://slate.com/technology/2018/04/facebook-collects-data-on-non-facebook-users-if-they-want-to-delete-it-they-have-to-sign-up.html
- Cambridge Analytica: how did they turn clicks into votes?:
  https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/may/06/cambridge-analytica-how-turn-clicks-into-votes-christopher-wylie
- Facebook's rules for accessing user data lured more than just Cambridge Analytica:
  https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/facebooks-rules-for-accessing-user-data-lured-more-than-just-cambridge-analytica/2018/03/19/31f6979c-658e-43d6-a71f-afdd8bf1308b_story.html

  On the politics and culture of the world's most powerful internet
  Companies:
- How Trump conquered Facebook without Russian ads:
  https://www.wired.com/story/how-trump-conquered-facebookwithout-russian-ads/
- Be Kind of Evil:
  http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2017/12/under_eric_schmidt_google_evolved_from_don_t_be_evil_to_be_kind_of_evil.html
- Growth at any cost: top Facebook exec defended data collection in 2016 memo - and warned that Facebook could get people killed:
  https://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanmac/growth-at-any-cost-top-facebook-executive-defended-data?utm_term=.eoOLGv0vZ0#.jiLkMRJRnJ
- Who does Facebook serve?
  https://slate.com/technology/2018/03/the-exit-of-alex-stamos-reveals-a-troubling-debate-within-facebook.html
- YouTube has deleted hundreds of thousands of disturbing kids' videos
  https://www.buzzfeed.com/blakemontgomery/youtube-has-deleted-hundreds-of-thousands-of-disturbing?utm_term=.gnyqmxyxZy#.lhw2ZKoKno

Guest lecturer

April Glaser, tech journalist at Slate [https://twitter.com/aprilaser]

Discussion
- Discuss the business model of the internet and how corporations profile their the unfathomable amounts of user data they collect to serve manipulative and targeted ads
- Discuss the major issues -- data collection, insecure storage of corporate data (eg Equifax), sharing with law enforcement, the dangers of targeting ads based on stereotypes, voter manipulation
- How were these sites allowed to grow unchecked for so long? What kinds of policy interventions are possible?
- Discuss the assignment together (see below)

Assignment

- Write 3-5 talking points about what we discussed this week. Think of ways you could incorporate all or some of those points into instruction that would work at your library.
- Incorporate some of this information into instruction or outreach that works for your library. This could be anything from bringing it up at a staff meeting or talking to a patron directly. Write down what you did and how it went.