

Design for This Century

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Response

The 2016 presidential election was a shocker to me and a lot of people around me. As young college students, most of our information comes from social media and our friends-generated contents. Since we not only share the same major, engineering and science, but most of us are from the great liberal state of California as well, it is extremely difficult to have any conservative news penetrate through our campus and the Newsfeed. While the homogeneity of news is already a major problem for the mass society. Flawed information or even fake news can cause more damage to our judgement. Whether Russians have interfered in the 2016 election still remains unclear, one thing we can be sure of is the fact that "20% of all political tweets were made by bots". In a world where it is non-trivial to tell the differences between humans and bots, how are we supposed to interact and acquire the necessary pieces of the truth to sustain our democracy?

There are barely anything individuals can do, as the article, *The Algorithmic Democracy* suggests. Large technological companies occupy the vast resources on creating algorithms and setting rules that can affect every aspect of our life. While we do have the power to boycott certain companies and stop using their service. Other companies replacing them will continue to exploit artificial intelligence to monetize their products. One thing to remember is that, AI still requires humans to train and set up several fundamental parameters to start running. And human interventions are naturally biased in their choices.

What we can do, in this case, is to simply ask more questions and educate the people around us: who benefits from a system that learns from users; what the AI's goals are; whether we, the users have a right to know how the AI was trained? And finally, who can be the ultimate arbiter of our information sources.