J.K. Rowling Transgender-Comments Controversy

A Web Archiving Forensics Study

Presented by Lesley Frew

October 17, 2022

Maya Forstater is a sustainable development researcher, but that isn't what she's known for

Google Scholar

Maya Forstater

FOLLOW

Visiting Fellow
No verified email - Homepage
Development sustainability finance tax corporate responsibility

TITLE	CITED BY	YEAR
Corporate social responsibility: Implications for small and medium enterprises in developing countries P Raynard, M Forstater United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	397	2002
Social labels: Tools for ethical trade S Zadek, S Lingayah, M Forstater London: New Economics Foundation	102	1998
The future of sustainability assurance S Zadek, P Raynard, M Forstater, J Oelschlaegel ACCA Research Report	84	2004
Corporate responsibility in African development: Insights from an emerging dialogue M Forstater, S Zadek, Y Guang, K Yu, CX Hong, M George African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 23, 43-45	78	2010

https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=b-UUHuAAAAAJ&view_op=list_works

Maya asserts that she lost her job because of her Twitter posts about her gender-critical opinions

In later September 2018 the Claimant made a number of comments about Pips/Philip Bunce, who is a senior director at Credit Suisse, wears dresses and a wig as Pips, according to press reports states "for me, being gender fluid means I am non-binary, at no fixed point on the gender expression spectrum. I personally have no desire to transition" and was awarded a place on a list of the Top 100 Women in Business. The comments were mainly made on twitter. They included the following:

> ""I've got a Q for my male twitter friends who have pledged not to appear on all male panels - if u were invited on a panel w Pip Bunce – one of FT's top 100 female champions of women in biz & another guy would u say yes or call the organisers & say sorry I don't do manels"
>
> [A manel is a panel with only men on it]
>
> ""Bunce does not 'masquerade as female' he is a man who likes to express himself part of the week by wearing a dress"
>
> "Yes. & weird he felt entitled to accept the award, instead of saying "sorry there has been a mistake I am a man who challenges gender norms"
>
> "He is a part-time cross dresser who mainly goes by the name of Phillip"
>
> "Yes I think that male people are not women. I don't think being a woman/ female is a matter of identity or womanly feelings. It is biology"
>
> "Bunce is a white man who likes to dress in women's clothes"

https://drive.google.com/file/d/12P9zf82TicPs2cCxlTnm0TrNFDD8Gaz5/view (archive)
https://twitter.com/MForstater/status/1044588721423638529 (archive)

Most of Maya's tweets are about the rights of cis women being impeded upon by transgender women

Maya Forstater
@MForstater

A decent go at the issues by @sullydish andrewsullivan.substack.com/p/a-truce-prop... Although misses the point that women & girls deserve "penis free spaces" not just in refuges but everyday life changing, washing, sleeping etc…

Of course treat trans people dignity, but treat women w dignity too?

Defend the rights of both women and trans women. In the overwhelming majority of cases, there is no conflict. In the few where there are, compromise. Women who have been abused by men and need a space free from any inkling of maleness and penises deserve such a space. Some shelters can include both trans women and women, but some shelters solely for women should absolutely have a right to exist.

Maya Forstater
@MForstater

This conversation!

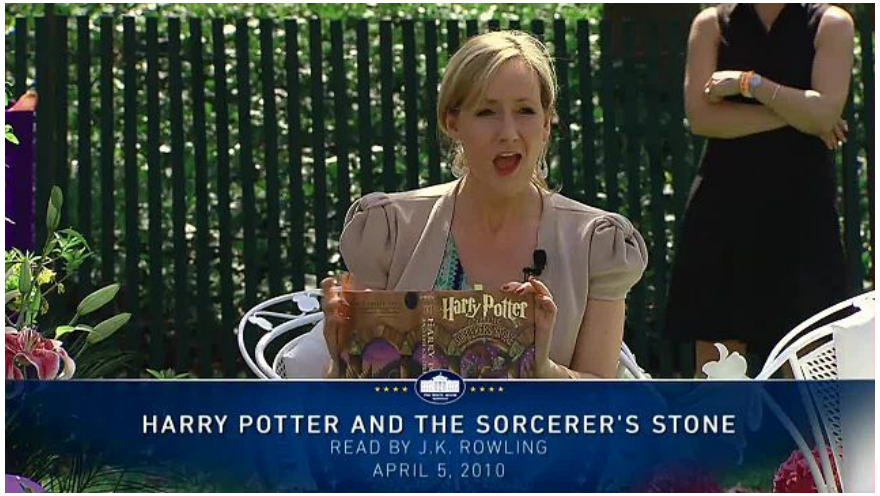
Should teenage girls have the right to be able to undress and shower in penis free spaces?

Aidan says the answer is "no", and any other answer is hateful.

Helen Staniland @helenstaniland · Dec 14, 2019
Replying to @EoghanLyng @AidanCTweets and 2 others
Can you say that teenage girls should have the right to be able to undress and shower in penis free spaces? Can you? Or will you say tbat they shouldn't be allowed?

https://twitter.com/MForstater/status/1380604366621663242 (archive)
https://twitter.com/MForstater/status/1206873477564829701 (archive)

A judge ruled *against* Maya's legal case on December 18, 2019, and J.K. Rowling reacted the next day:

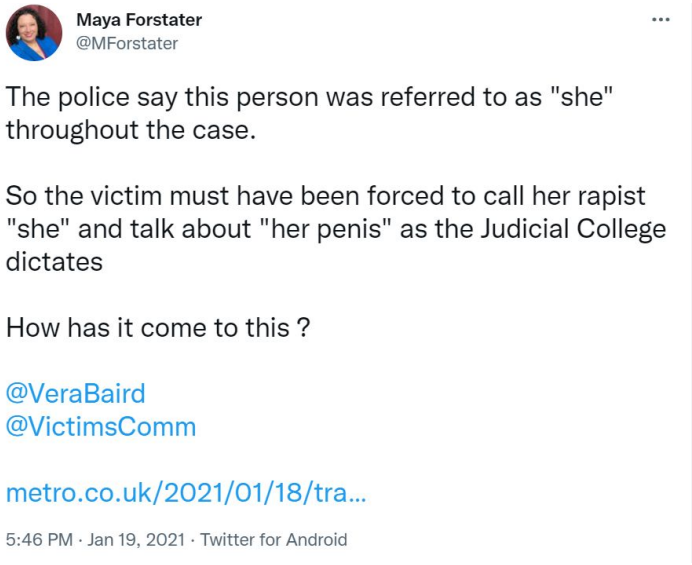


https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033 (archive)
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J._K._Rowling_at_the_White_House_2010-04-05_7.jpg

J.K. Rowling posted a second gender-critical controversial tweet in June, 2020

https://twitter.com/MForstater/status/1233476064657182721 (archive)
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1269382518362509313 (archive)

The ideas in J.K. Rowling's tweets are shared by Maya and other gender-critical feminists



https://twitter.com/MForstater/status/1351662397778497547 (archive)
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1470092815506063365 (archive)

J.K. Rowling has deleted tweets before

https://www.facebook.com/nate.pipkin/posts/10158336827397999 (stephen king archive)

JKR's deleted tweet about Stephen King can be found by prefix search on the Wayback Machine

INTERNET ARCHIVE

DONATE

Wayback Machine

Explore more than 752 billion web pages saved over time

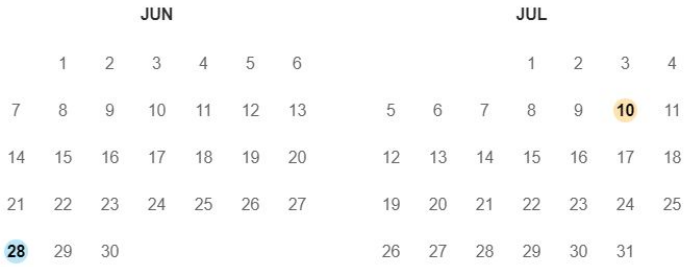
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277

Calendar · Collections · Changes · Summary · Site Map · URLs

404 URLs have been captured for this URL prefix.

Filter results by URL or MIME Type (i.e. '.txt')

URL ↑	MIME Type	From	To	Captures	Duplicates	Uniques
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277265819744043008?ref_src=twsrc^tfw&lang=vi	text/html	Jun 29, 2020	Jun 29, 2020	1	0	1
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277265819744043008?ref_src=twsrc^tfw&lang=zh-cn	text/html	Jun 29, 2020	Jun 29, 2020	1	0	1
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277265819744043008?ref_src=twsrc^tfw&lang=zh-tw	text/html	Jun 29, 2020	Jun 29, 2020	1	0	1
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277266662442635265	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Jun 28, 2020	1	0	1
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277267114492035073	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Jun 28, 2020	1	0	1
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277272714538037249	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Dec 1, 2021	6	0	6
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277276256736854016	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Sep 23, 2021	5	0	5
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277301209024671745	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Jun 28, 2020	1	0	1
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277323348255506432	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Jun 1, 2021	5	1	4
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277324898420088833	text/html	Jun 28, 2020	Jun 28, 2020	1	0	1



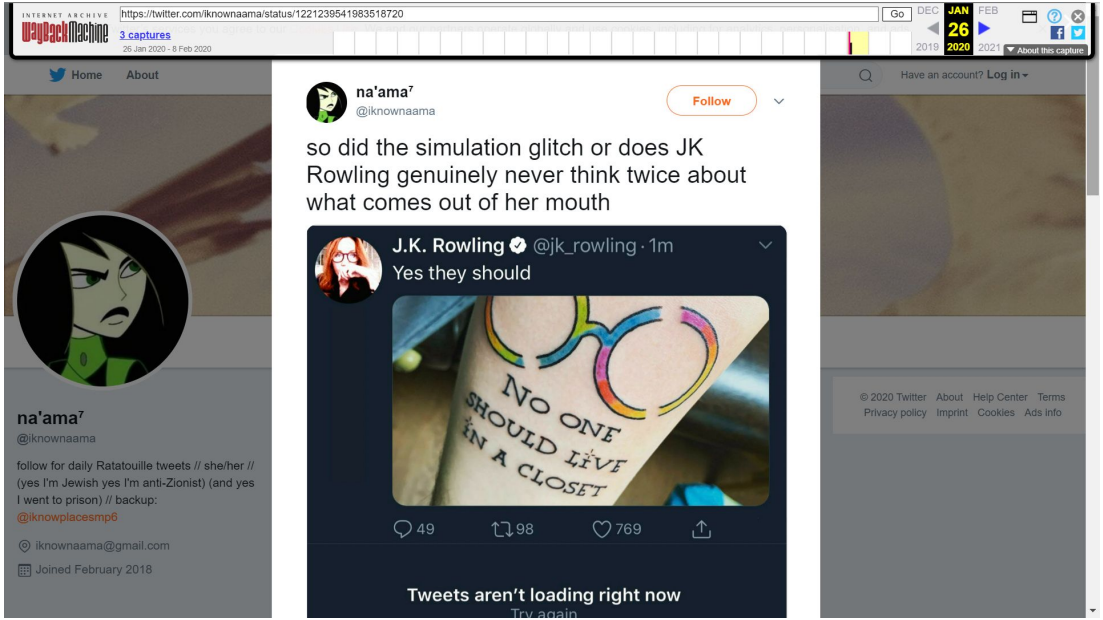
The visual timemap shows that the only capture with a 200 status code is on June 28, 2020

https://web.archive.org/web/*/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277*
https://web.archive.org/web/20200601000000*/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1277323348255506432

J.K. Rowling is a prime target for fake tweets

- She tweets controversial opinions
- She has deleted tweets about controversial topics

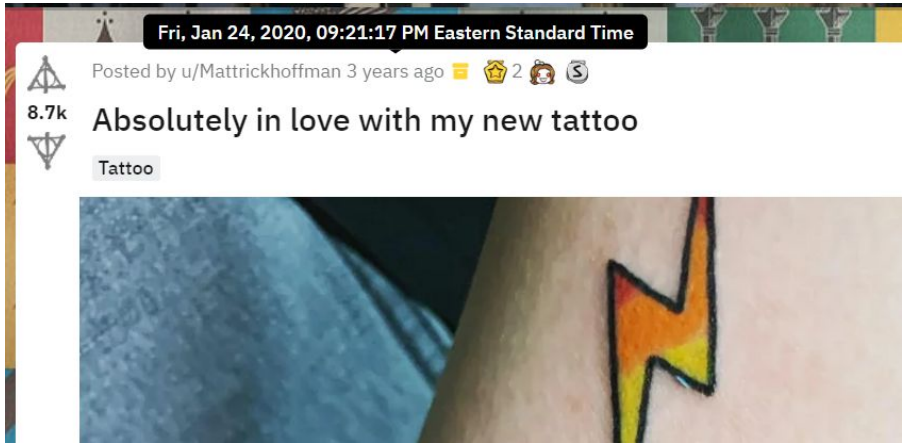
Investigation 1: Is this screenshot of an anti-gay J.K. Rowling tweet from January 2020 real?



Via TruthOrFiction.com

https://web.archive.org/web/20200126040808/https://twitter.com/iknownaama/status/1221239541983518720

The uncropped tattoo was posted on Reddit one day before it appeared in the screenshot on Twitter



https://www.reddit.com/r/harrypotter/comments/etkq5f/absolutely_in_love_with_my_new_tattoo/ (archive)

Was @iknownaama the original poster of the tweet screenshot?

HalfTangible @HalfTangible · Jan 25, 2020
PffffftAHAHAH

@SophNar0747 posted the screenshot earlier, but there aren't any mementos of that tweet

@iknownaama

TweetedAt

1221239541983518720

```
Tweet ID:         1221239541983518720
Tweeted:          2 years and 8 months ago
ISO 8601:         2020-01-26T01:12:50.999Z
RFC 1123:         Sun, 26 Jan 2020 01:12:50 GMT
In your timezone: Sat, 25 Jan 2020 20:12:50 GMT-0500 (Eastern Standard Time)
```

@SophNar0747

TweetedAt

1221205369004924928

```
Tweet ID:         1221205369004924928
Tweeted:          2 years and 8 months ago
ISO 8601:         2020-01-25T22:57:03.526Z
RFC 1123:         Sat, 25 Jan 2020 22:57:03 GMT
In your timezone: Sat, 25 Jan 2020 17:57:03 GMT-0500 (Eastern Standard Time)
```

https://oduwsdl.github.io/tweetedat/

@SophNar0747 claims they did not post the screenshot maliciously, & they also support the Maya tweet

This Tweet was deleted by the Tweet author. Learn more

Shawn Bird @ShawnTheRuiner · Jan 25, 2020

Replying to @SophNar0747

That looks extremely fake. I can't imagine her saying something like that. After all she retconned characters to be gay.

1 1

Sophia Narwitz
@SophNar0747

Replying to @ShawnTheRuiner

As I originally said, I thought it was a blunder on her part, as if she was referencing Harry and she deleted it once she realized how it actually looked.

Sophia Narwitz @SophNar0747 · Dec 19, 2019

Tranny here. And yeah, **Rowling** & the researcher are correct. Hormones dont change my biology. I will forever have male chromosomes, & more. I am biologically male. If I wasnt then I wouldnt need to transition. Is the fringe left/woke community really becoming this anti-science

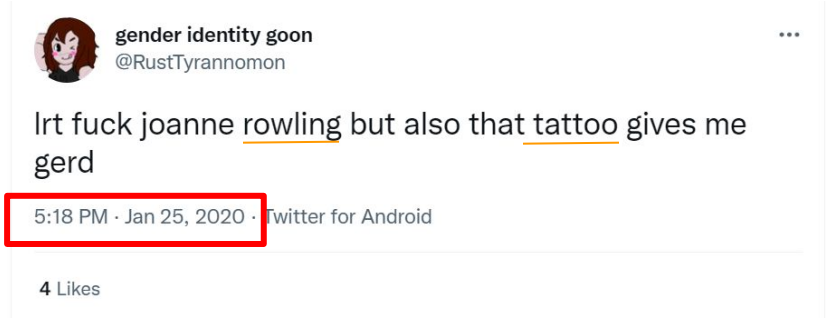
Photo via @HBODocs

UK news

JK Rowling faces backlash for defending a woman who lost her job after transgender

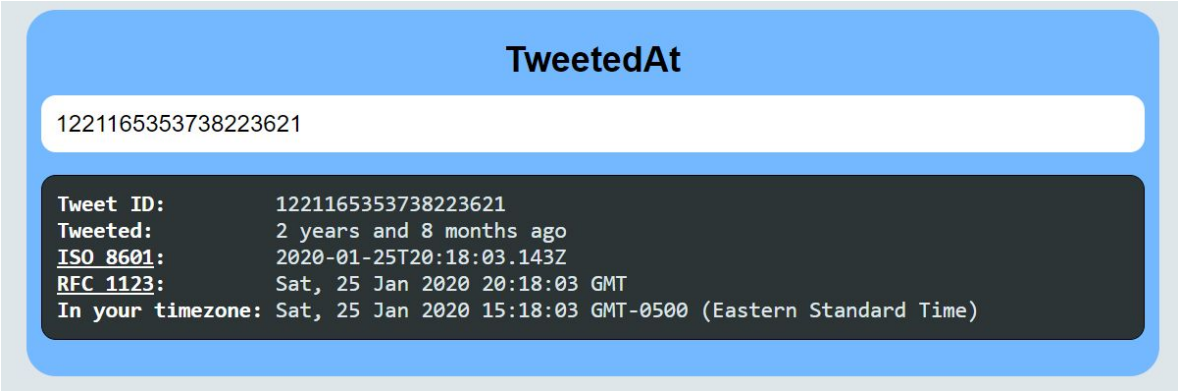
https://twitter.com/SophNar0747/status/1221209881816059904 (archive)
https://twitter.com/SophNar0747/status/1207727916358029313 (archive)

Was @SophNar0747 the original poster of the tweet screenshot?



Spooky Little Guy @LordGrey93 · Jan 25, 2020
Hahahahahahaahahahahah

@__Tet_ posted the screenshot even earlier, but their account is suspended and unarchived

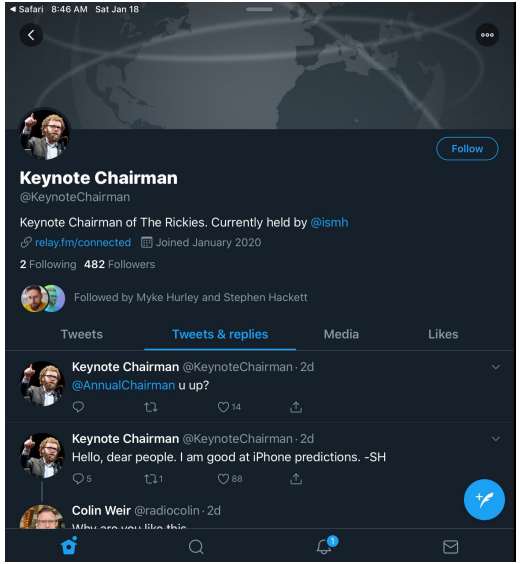


https://oduwsdl.github.io/tweetedat/

@__Tet_’s username at the time was @T_E_T_W_A_V_E

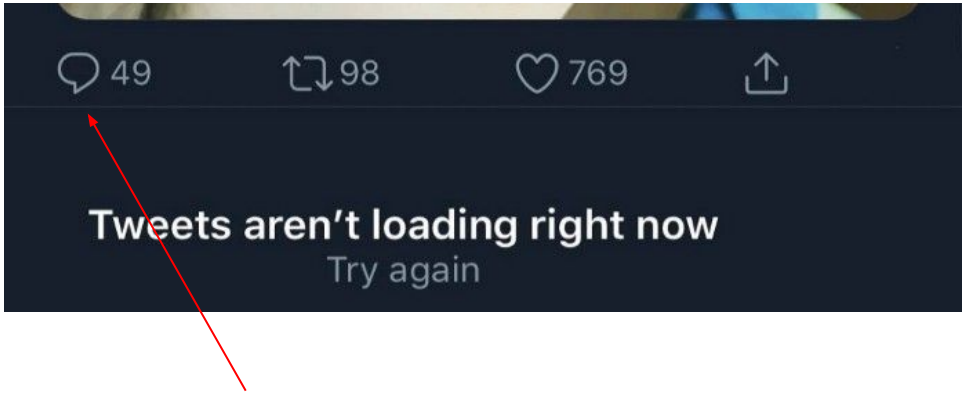
https://web.archive.org/web/20200125215556/https://twitter.com/LordGrey93/status/1221187980192296960

Screenshots of real tweets from 2020 can be used to identify layout inconsistencies in the JKR screenshot

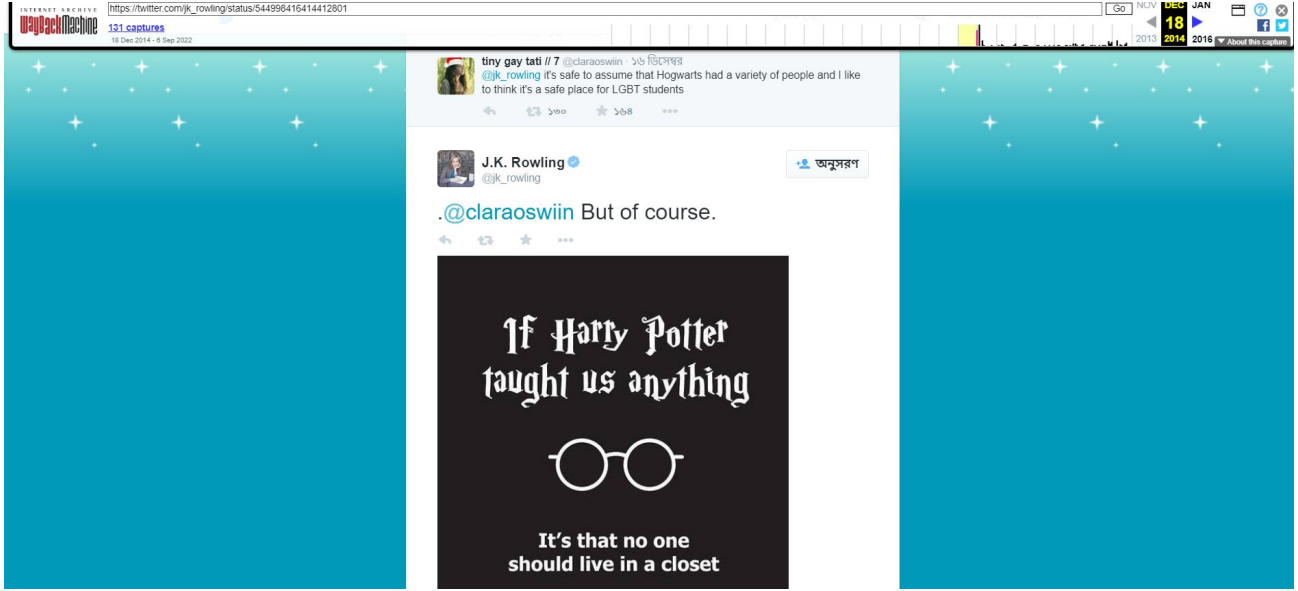


https://9to5mac.com/2019/03/28/twitter-black-dark-mode-iphone/ (archive)
https://github.com/KyleJonesWinsted/TwitterPhiller/blob/master/README.md (archive)
https://twitter.com/rikkles/status/1239259082764234752 (archive)

The horizontal rule in the screenshot is too close to the bottom icons compared to real 2020 screenshots



The supposed tweet doesn't correspond with J.K. Rowling's previous real tweets on the topic



https://web.archive.org/web/20141218171021/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/544998416414412801

Another user made a copycat post one day later - using the screenshot image with the rounded corners

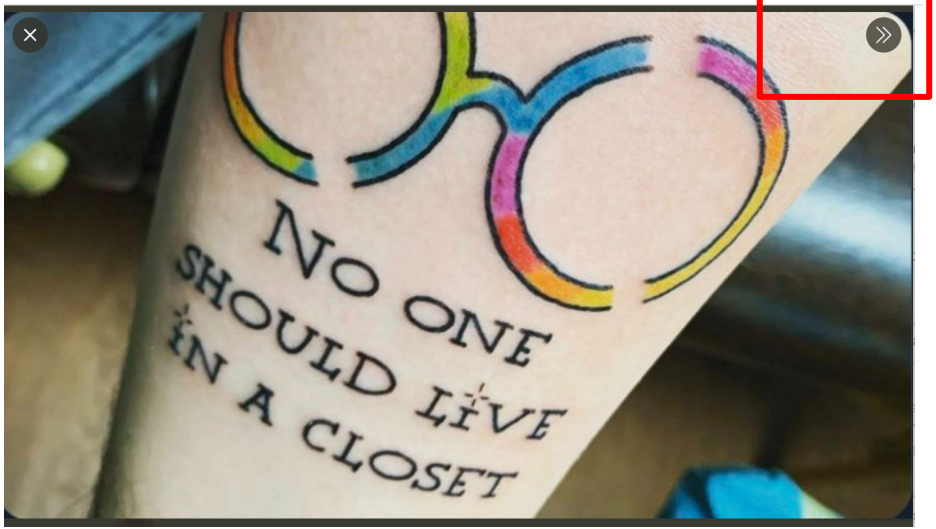
image "yes they should" until:2020-01-31

carlita
@carlita_express

Yes they should

9:49 AM · Jan 26, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

8 Likes



https://twitter.com/carlita_express/status/1221445036421853186 (archive)

Was the screenshot posted as disinformation or satire?

https://twitter.com/spookperson/status/1221239998222962689 (archive)

The comments on @T_E_T_W_A_V_E's tweet memento don't indicate satire

keep your hands off lupin @EpicFunnyName · 49m
Replying to @T_E_T_W_A_V_E
good lord did she actually say that?
1 13

Tet ♤♡◊♧ @T_E_T_W_A_V_E · 47m
Yep. I am hearing reports from my agents on the scene that ....yup, this is reportedly "not a good look"
11

Bluecy @redwhitetwice · 45m
Replying to @T_E_T_W_A_V_E
Couldnt find it. Got a wayback/srchive?
1 1

Tet ♤♡◊♧ @T_E_T_W_A_V_E · 44m
No
1 1

1 more reply

katiemine // 20 days!
@starlesbian
Follow
Replying to @T_E_T_W_A_V_E
Was this real?
1:45 PM - 25 Jan 2020
8 Likes
1 8

standby for titanfall @erven_eth · Jan 25
Replying to @starlesbian @T_E_T_W_A_V_E
I didn't see it on her Twitter but maybe she deleted it? Idk
1 15

icarus @ Promare spa au @plzdobruh · 24h
The "tweets not loading" at the bottom of the screenshot indicated that the person got the screenshot just before it was deleted
2 35

https://web.archive.org/web/20200125210757/https://twitter.com/T_E_T_W_A_V_E/status/1221165353738223621
https://web.archive.org/web/20200126222302/https://twitter.com/starlesbian/status/1221187403769098241

Investigation 2: Were 60,000 likes removed from J.K. Rowling's tweet about Maya?

Gemma Stone

Mar 4, 2021 · 6 min read · Member-only · Listen

'Likes' are being removed from JK Rowling's transphobic tweet

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Gemma Stone

6.6K Followers

Transgender journalist. All of my writing is available for free @ TransWrites.World.

Follow

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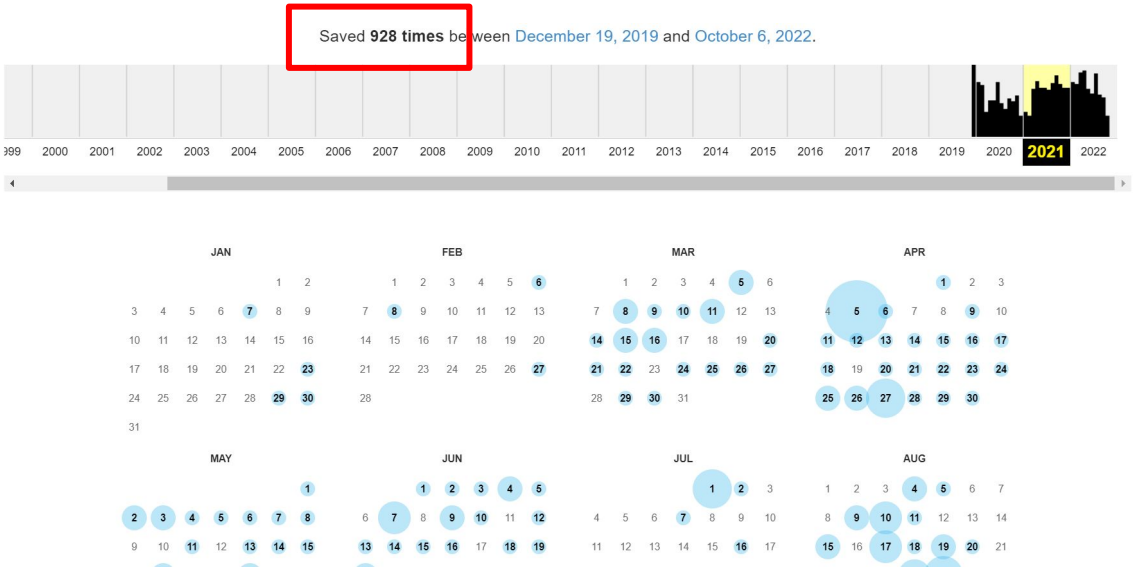
Gemma Stone

A new tactic for transphobia;

https://medium.com/@notCursedE/likes-are-being-removed-from-jk-rowling-s-transphobic-tweet-1fc81e961cd8 (archive)

J.K. Rowling's tweet about Maya is frequently archived



https://web.archive.org/web/20210401000000*/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033

Every tweet memento records the number of historical likes at that memento's datetime

https://web.archive.org/web/20210206063111/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033

The TimeMap for J.K. Rowling's tweet about Maya contains 986 mementos - and 986 data points

- `memgator-windows-amd64 --format=JSON https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033 > timemap.json`
- This command was run on October 5, 2022


```
{
  "original_uri": "https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033",
  "self": "http://localhost:1208/timemap/json/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033",
  "mementos": {
    "list": [
      {
        "datetime": "2019-12-19T13:11:10Z",
        "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20191219131110/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
      },
      {
        "datetime": "2019-12-19T13:12:01Z",
        "uri": "http://archive.md/20191219131201/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
      },
      {
        "datetime": "2019-12-19T13:24:38Z",
        "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20191219132438/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
      },
```

The Like data is stored as a value according to the standard Interaction Schema

Dress however you please.
Call yourself whatever you like.
Sleep with any consenting adult who'll have you.
Live your best life in peace and security.
But force women out of their jobs for stating that sex is real?
#IStandWithMaya #ThisIsNotADrill

12:57 PM · Dec 19, 2019 · Twitter Web App

66K Retweets **36K** Quote Tweets **265.5K** Likes

Pretty HTML

```
16 <meta content="https://schema.org/LikeAction"
       itemProp="interactionType"/>
17 <meta content="Likes" itemProp="name"/>
18 <meta content="https://twitter.com/jk_rowling
       /status/1207646162813100033/likes" itemProp
       ="url"/>
19 <meta content="265549" itemProp
       ="userInteractionCount"/>undefined</div
       >undefined<div itemProp
       ="interactionStatistic" itemscope=""
       itemType="https://schema.org
       /InteractionCounter">
20 <meta content="https://schema.org
       /InteractAction" itemProp="interactionType"
       />
21 <meta content="Retweets" itemProp="name"/>
22 <meta content="https://twitter.com/jk_rowling
       /status/1207646162813100033/retweets"
       itemProp="url"/>
23 <meta content="66074" itemProp
       ="userInteractionCount"/>undefined</div
       >undefined<div itemProp
```

https://web.archive.org/web/20221002192337id_/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033
https://jsonformatter.org/html-pretty-print

The Like data is stored differently in the pre-2022 Twitter layout

Dress however you please. Call yourself whatever you like. Sleep with any consenting adult who'll have you. Live stating that sex is real? **#IStandWithMaya** **#ThisIsNotADrill**

4:57 AM - 19 Dec 2019

- **59,088** Retweets
- **251,721** Likes
- MomPsteroM 🏴 夕灯🎆 シャドウバン中✌ SelfHelpWeirdo LadyOfTheFlowers 🌺🦕 Nix

40,036 replies 59,088 retweets 251,721 likes

Reply

Retweet | Retweeted

Like | Liked

```
<ul class="stats" aria-label="Retweeted and favorited by">
    <li class="js-stat-count js-stat-retweets stat-count" aria-hidden="true">
      <a tabindex=0 role="button"
        data-tweet-stat-count="59088"
        data-compact-localized-count="59K"
        class="request-retweeted-popup"
        data-activity-popup-title="59,088 retweets">

          <strong>59,088</strong> Retweets
      </a>
    </li>

    <li class="js-stat-count js-stat-favorites stat-count" aria-hidden="true">
      <a tabindex=0 role="button"
        data-tweet-stat-count="251721"
        data-compact-localized-count="252K"
        class="request-favorited-popup"
        data-activity-popup-title="251,721 likes">

          <strong>251,721</strong> Likes
      </a>
    </li>
```

https://web.archive.org/web/20211225020859id_/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033

Twitter Was Already Difficult To Archive, Now It's Worse!

Python can extract the Like data from each memento of the tweet

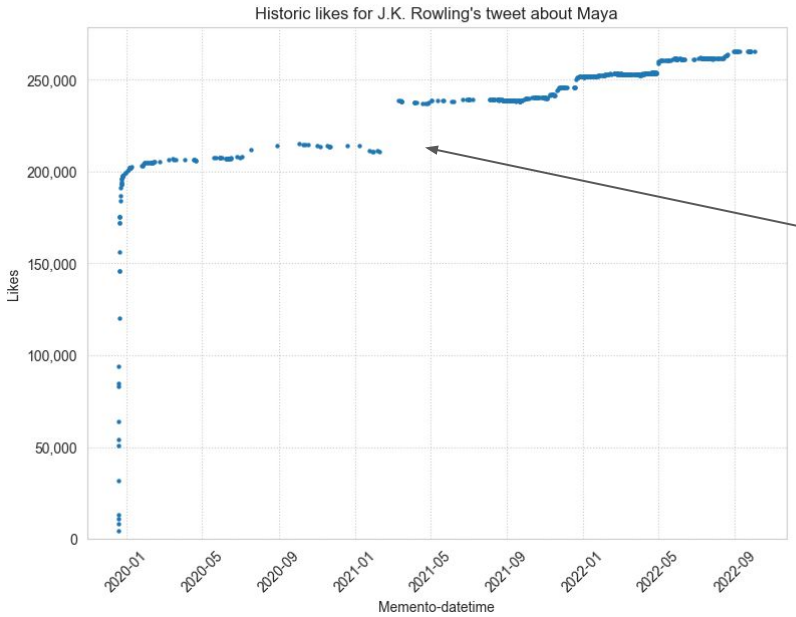
Get the URI of each tweet memento in the timemap using pandas

Get the HTML tree for each memento using requests and Beautiful Soup

Extract the Like data from the memento (implement 2022 and pre-2022 algorithms)

Output the like data (memento datetime and likes) in csv format

The data from the mementos shows no evidence that large numbers of likes were removed



There's a gap from 2021-02-08 to 2021-03-11 that also coincides with a comparatively large spike in likes

There are barely any mementos in the timemap during February 2021


```
{
  "datetime": "2021-01-30T02:59:29Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210130025929/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
{
  "datetime": "2021-02-06T06:31:11Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210206063111/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
{
  "datetime": "2021-02-08T07:46:40Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210208074640/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
{
  "datetime": "2021-02-27T11:25:22Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210227112522/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
{
  "datetime": "2021-03-05T05:12:22Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210305051222/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
{
  "datetime": "2021-03-05T18:32:43Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210305183243/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
{
  "datetime": "2021-03-08T00:15:56Z",
  "uri": "https://web.archive.org/web/20210308001556/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033"
},
```

There are mementos in the gap period that are a prefix match for the tweet

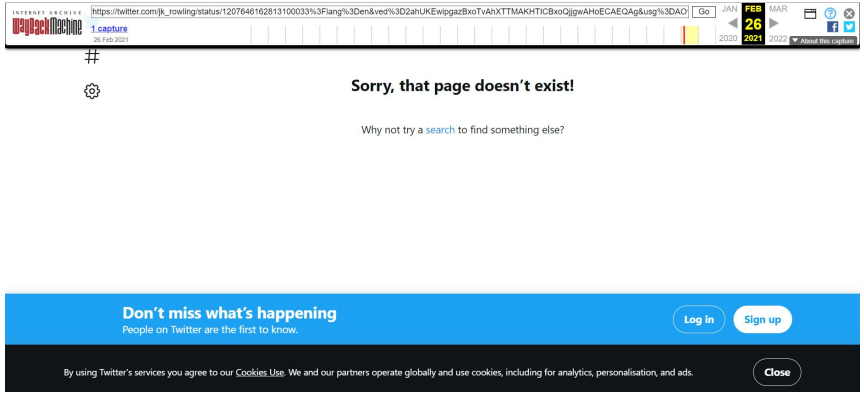
- `curl -s "http://web.archive.org/cdx/search/cdx?url=https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033&matchType=prefix" | awk '{print "https://web.archive.org/web/" $2 "/" $3};' > cdxout.txt`
- `cat cdxout.txt | grep "/20210[23].*[^3]$" | sort > cdxout2.txt`

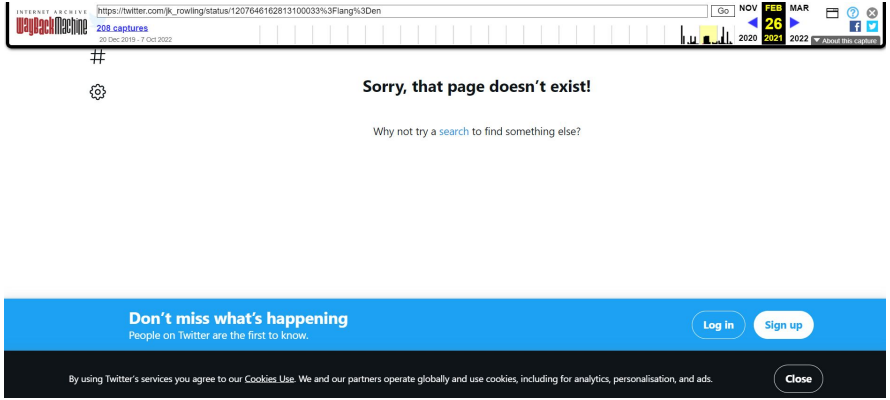
https://github.com/phonedude/cs895-f22/blob/main/slides/timemaps-cdx-search.md

Not all web archives have prefix match mementos for the gap period

- No match at archive.today: https://archive.ph/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033*
- No match at Library of Congress: https://webarchive.loc.gov/all/19960101000000-20211002235959*/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033*

Unfortunately, the new mementos found during the gap have errors





https://web.archive.org/web/20210226190449/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033%3Flang%3Den&ved%3D2ahUKEwipgazBxoTvAhXTTMAKHTICBxoQjjgwAHoECAEQAg&usg%3DAOvVaw0kQIXoy57QaFzH1TZhCXn8
https://web.archive.org/web/20210226194042/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033%3Flang%3Den

Some of the mementos in the original time map weren't processed because they aren't in English

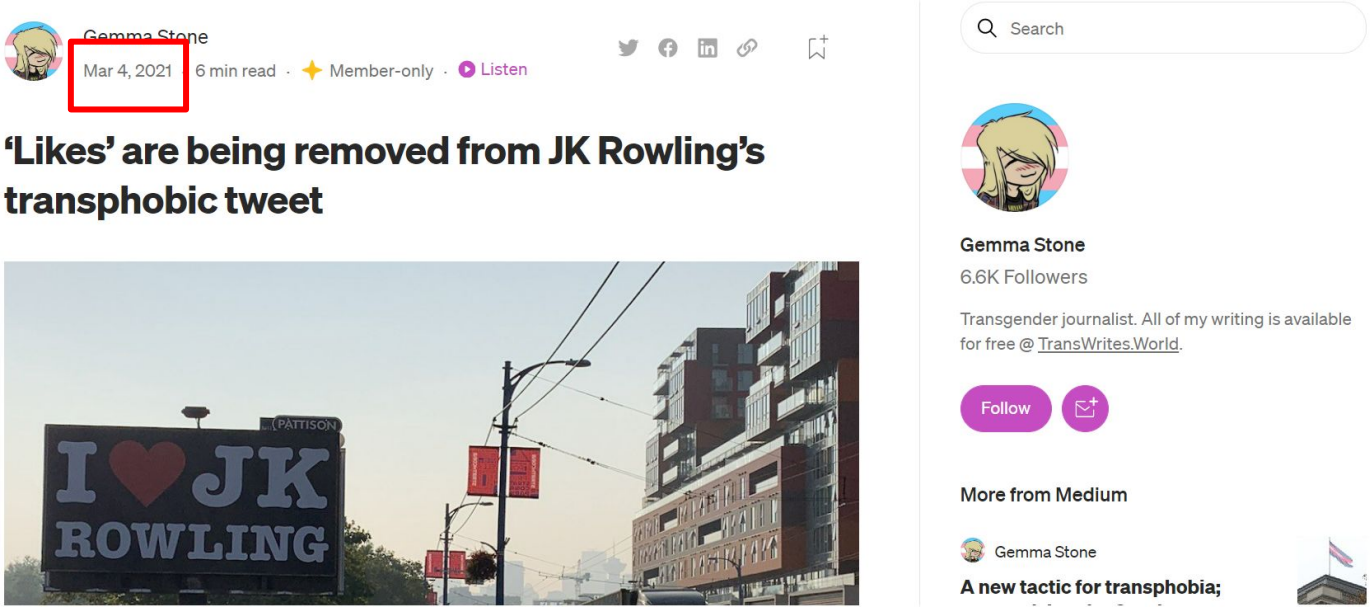
https://web.archive.org/web/20210227112522/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033
https://web.archive.org/web/20210305183445/https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1207646162813100033?lang=fr

Cookie Violations Cause Archived Twitter Pages to Simultaneously Replay in Multiple Languages

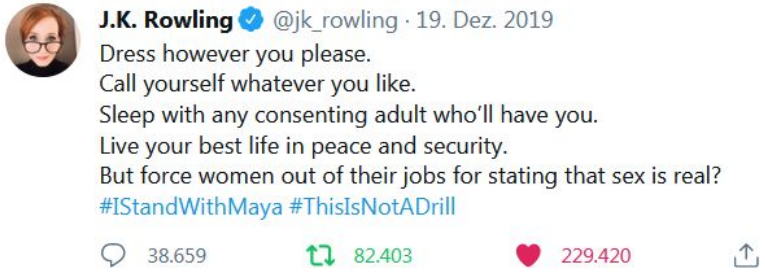
What happened between February 27 and March 5?

- Mementos don't add any data for this time period
- What other data or social cues could help fill in the gap?

The Medium article was published on March 4, 2021 - did it cause the spike in likes?

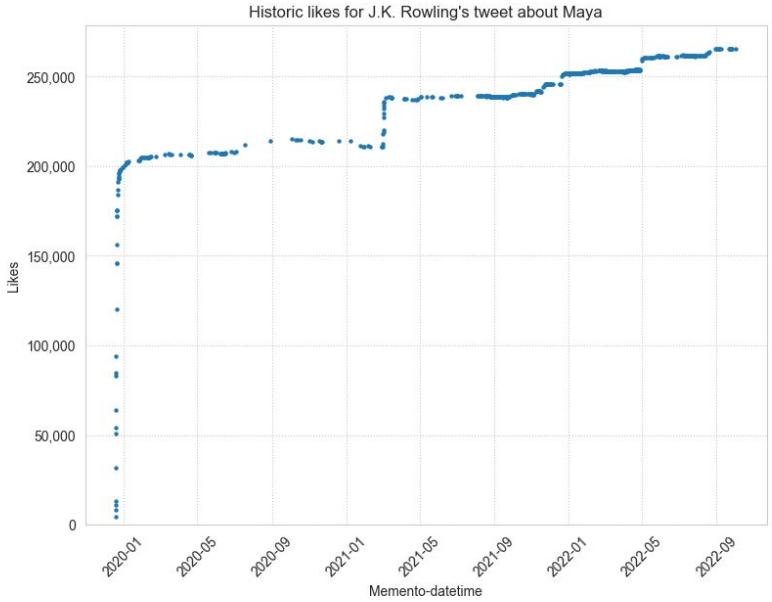


Many users tweeted screenshots of the Maya tweet with likes on March 2, saying their likes were deleted



https://twitter.com/xset13/status/1366070263239094273 (image archive)
https://twitter.com/c_groetzinger/status/1366744450412740609 (archive)
https://twitter.com/SmugPigFace/status/1366870750867709956 (image archive)

The screenshots and the timestamps of their tweets can be used to fill in the gap



Likes stop showing as active on Twitter after a certain amount of time, but they're not deleted

https://medium.com/@dotnetster/twitter-wheres-my-likes-588bc6ca3625

Gemma also tweeted the tattoo screenshot - All of the players are intertwined

https://twitter.com/notCursedE/status/1221451236622393345 (archive)

Conclusion:

- J.K. Rowling is a target for misinformation on Twitter because she tweets controversial opinions and has previously deleted her tweets
- J.K. Rowling did not tweet an anti-gay tweet in January 2020, and mementos helped uncover the original tweet with the screenshot
- Twitter is not deleting likes from J.K. Rowling's tweets, and mementos in archives can be scraped for historical Like data