# Mediate 2020: News Media and Computational Journalism Workshop

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## Abstract

The first Mediate workshop was held virtually on June 8th, 2020, as part of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM). The main goal of the workshop was to bring together media practitioners and technologists to discuss new opportunities and obstacles that arise in the modern era of information diffusion. This year's theme was *Social and News Media Misinformation*, the various forms it can take, and the different ways one can approach it.

Social and News Media Misinformation is a pervasive problem of our time, which heavily permeates our day-to-day news consumption. Mediate workshop brought together academics and practitioners, spanning many different backgrounds, from computer science, natural language processing, and network science to journalism and education. The goal of the workshop was to consider the different streams of research and work on misinformation, and to highlight some important open questions.

The first topic of our workshop was *"Social Initiatives against Misinformation"* and consisted of two invited talks. It opened with Amy X. Zhang (University of Washington) discussing how people with varying expertise judge news credibility and reliability. In their work, they collaborated with Credibility Coalition (`http://credibilitycoalition.org`), a research community that fosters a collaborative approach to understanding the veracity, quality and credibility of online information. The key take-away of the talk was that people's ratings have higher correlation to journalism experts compared to science experts as well as that raters' gender and political leaning impact their ratings. Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck, founder and CEO of Lie Detectors (`https://lie-detectors.org`), then spoke about enabling schoolchildren to identify misinformation online. Some take-aways were that young people are now more acutely aware of the danger of misinformation because of COVID-19, that technology currently plays a limited role in increasing their media literacy, and that trust is an important issue for them.

The second topic of the workshop was *"News Analytics"* and consisted of three contributed talks. Antonia Saravanou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) presented a learning to rank approach for detecting notable news stories. Elena Kochkina (University of Warwick and The Alan Turing Institute) discussed the relationship between the tasks of rumour, stance, and veracity classification in social media conversations. Finally, Luca Luceri (University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland) presented a study on social media manipulation campaigns, where they showed that bots strategically mimic the human temporal activity, and balance their interaction among human and bot population.

The third topic was *"Political and Scientific Misinformation"* and consisted of three invited talks. It started with Sibel Adali (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) who described how social trust is not a single concept but incorporates many different constructs relating to both competence and integrity of individuals. These constructs may be evaluated differently cognitively and models that incorporate this distinction are able to provide a nuanced solution to important problems. Filippo Menczer (Indiana University) presented four reasons why social networks make us vulnerable to misinformation. First, echo chambers makes users exhibiting specific characteristics (e.g., political views) easy to target. Second, viral dynamics could lead to high content exposure. Third, engagement bias, i.e. users are likely to share content that received significant engagement. Last, social bots are commonly used in manipulation campaigns. Ivan Oransky (Medscape and New York University), co-founder of Retraction Watch (`https://retractionwatch.com`), discussed misinformation in scientific publications which manifests as retractions. The number of retractions is significant and the rate of retraction seems to have had an increasing trend over several years. The causes for retractions can vary widely (e.g., error, fake peer review, plagiarism, not reproducible).

Talks in our workshop focused on detecting misinformation in its many forms, on understanding its different facets and what enables it to prosper, and on ways to mitigate it (e.g., through media literacy). Two high-level themes, trust and intention, have emerged as open questions. How can one quantify and/or instil trust in media? How can one causally link, in an automated way, the presence of misinformation with human intention or action? Multidisciplinary workshops on misinformation, or more generally on digital media, will hopefully continue to bring together the wide range of efforts in this space and to highlight the challenges and opportunities ahead.