



Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science

SPECIAL COLLOQUIUM ANNOUNCEMENT

Threats to the information ecosystem

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Abstract

Social media and before them the Web have deeply transformed the information ecosystem, ushering us into a new era of civic engagement and innovation at a global scale. However, a number of worrisome trends threaten the foundations of these public platforms. Misinformation boosted by automated amplifiers (i.e., social bots) is an obvious example, but we are also witnessing to the rise of other negative 'malinformation' trends, such as harassment, hate speech, and gender inequality. In this talk I will describe my contributions to understanding what is threatening the integrity of the modern digital information ecosystem, and reducing universal access to it. I will first describe one of the first large-scale, systematic studies of gender inequality and objectification in the social gaming platform Twitch. I will then talk about tracking the diffusion of digital misinformation and the manipulation strategies employed by social bots on Twitter. Finally, on the side of possible countermeasures to the spread of false information, I will describe a novel approach to mining knowledge networks like Wikipedia to perform fact-checking. This research could find application in those domains that are currently struggling to cope with massive volumes of unstructured data that need to be checked, like newsrooms and civic society at large. I will conclude describing an agenda of future research in this new exciting field. 1313 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Cudahy Hall, Room 401, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881

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