Introduction to the 2019 International Conference on Social Media & Society

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an introduction to the Proceedings of the 2019 International Conference on Social Media and Society (#SMSociety). The conference is an annual gathering of leading social media researchers, policy makers, and practitioners from around the world. Now in its 10th year, the 2019 conference is hosted by the Social Media Lab at the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. The Proceedings features a total of 26 papers (the acceptance rate is 42%).

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → Social media • **Information systems** → World Wide Web → Web mining **Information systems** → World Wide Web → Web searching and information discovery • **Information systems** → World Wide Web → Web applications

KEYWORDS

Social Media Research; Social Media; SMSociety

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The International Conference on Social Media & Society is an annual gathering of leading social media researchers, policy makers, and practitioners from around the world. Now, in its 10th year, the 2019 conference is being held in Toronto, Canada at Ryerson University from July 19–21, 2019.

From its inception, the conference has focused on the best practices for studying the impact and implications of social media on society. Organized by Ryerson University's Social Media Lab, the conference provides participants with opportunities to exchange ideas, present original research, learn about recent and ongoing studies, and network with peers.

The conference's intensive three-day program features 2 keynote speakers, 8 workshops, 4 panels, 26 full papers, 60 work-in-progress papers, and 45 posters. The wide-ranging topics in social media showcase quantitative and qualitative research from scholars working in many fields including Management, Communication, Information Science, Computer Science, Education, Journalism, Political Science, Health and Sociology.

The Proceedings include 26 published papers on various topics, including:

- Activism
- Algorithms & Echo-Chambers
- Disasters, Outbreaks, & Environment
- Virality & Multimedia
- Education
- Emotions & Well-Being
- Health
- Identity & Community
- Influencers
- Mobile Use & Users
- News
- Politics
- Privacy
- Security & Anonymity
- Young People

CONFERENCE THEME: RETHINKING PRIVACY AND TRUST IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA AGE

Can we trust what we hear and see on social media? For a time, social media was viewed as a net positive for society. In their 2013 book, *The New Digital Age,* Google's Jared Cohen and Eric Schmidt wrote: "Never before have so many people been connected through an instantly responsive network." In 2015, Mark Zuckerberg, the co-founder and CEO of Facebook, wrote a glowing endorsement of the internet and social media calling it "a force for peace in the world." He argued that connecting people through social media would help to bring about a "shared understanding" of the human condition and build a "common global community."

Fast forward to 2019, social media is now embroiled in a series of ongoing public scandals involving data abuse and misuse—with the most infamous scandal involving the UK data analytics firm *Cambridge Analytica*. More troubling is the fact that social media has emerged as fertile ground for fostering anti-social behaviour [1], [2] and is an important vector for disinformation, misinformation, information and manipulation operations [3]–[5]. These realities have raised privacy concerns and challenged public trust in social media, which has resulted in a revitalized call for new legislation and regulation [6]–[9].

Considering this context, this year's conference asks:

- What does "privacy" and "trust" mean in the social media age?

- How does social media manipulation affect political trust and tolerance?

- How is social media being used to help build and strengthen trust in political, economic, social and cultural realms of society?

- What roles do alternative social networking services (such as Diaspora, Mastodon, and Gab.ai) play in the current social media environment where hashtag campaigns (such as #DeleteFacebook, #MAGA and #MeToo) have become prevalent?

- What theoretical and methodological tools can researchers rely on for ethical and privacy-protective collection, analysis, and sharing of social media datasets?

- What are the consequences of data regulations such as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) on the industry and users? Are these regulations effective?

- What are emerging successful user engagement models for governments, journalists, financial institutions, marketers, and others in today's social media landscape?

- What is the future of social media research without APIs?

- How can we measure authentic (or organic) user engagement while properly accounting for bot-driven (or paid) interactions?

- How does algorithmic architecture influence how we discover and interact with others?

- What role do algorithms play in creating divisive culture in social media?

- What are the ethical concerns of algorithms (such as inclusion, accessibility, discrimination, bots) and might they be mitigated?

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

This year, we are delighted to have Tarleton Gillespie and Valerie Steeves as the keynote speakers.

Tarleton Gillespie is a principal researcher at Microsoft Research New England, and an affiliated Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Department of Information Science at Cornell University. His new book, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions that Shape Social Media* (Yale University Press) was published in June 2018. He is also the author of *Wired Shut: Copyright and the Shape of Digital Culture* (MIT Press, 2007), the co-editor of *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society* (MIT, 2014), and the co-founder of the blog Culture Digitally. Tarleton's keynote address will be on "Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media."

Valerie Steeves is a Full Professor in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa. As the lead researcher of MediaSmarts' Young Canadians in a Wired World research project, she has been tracking young people's use of new media since 2000. She is also the principal investigator of the eQuality Project, a seven-year SSHRC-funded partnership exploring young people's experiences of privacy and equality in networked spaces. Steeves will present on "Not So Social, Not So Networked: Teens' Perspectives of Privacy and Trust on Social Media."

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The conference is a result of the tremendous work by our Organizing Committee, Program Committee, and Advisory Board. The Organizing Committee is responsible for the organization of the annual conference, including soliciting high-quality submissions, assigning peer-reviewers, deciding on submission acceptance, developing the conference schedule, and hosting the conference. The 2019 Organizing Committee includes:

Conference General Chairs
Anatoliy Gruzd, Ryerson University, Canada
Philip Mai, Ryerson University, Canada
Priya Kumar, Ryerson University, Canada

Full Papers Chairs
Jenna Jacobson, Ryerson University, Canada
Raquel Recuero, Federal University of Pelotas and Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

WIP Papers Chairs
Hazel Kwon, Arizona State University, USA
Jeff Hemsley, Syracuse University, USA

Panel Chairs
Anabel Quan-Haase, Western University, Canada
Luke Sloan, Cardiff University, UK

Poster Chair
Jaigris Hodson, Royal Roads University, Canada

CONFERENCE ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Board is comprised of leading scholars in the field who advise the Organizing Committee on future directions of the conference, including conference themes, publication venues, and recommended keynote speakers. The 2019 Advisory Board includes:

- Caroline Haythornthwaite, Syracuse University, USA
- Susan Halford, University of Bristol, UK
- Zizi Papacharissi, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA
- Barry Wellman, NetLab Network & Social Media Lab, Ryerson University, Canada

CONFERENCE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The 2019 Programs Committee includes 140 scholars coming from 114 institutions and 26 countries who rigorously conduct and oversee the peer review process for all full and WIP papers (either by doing double blind reviews themselves or assigning sub-reviewers). We are delighted to have diverse disciplinary and methodological perspectives on the committee. For a full list of the conference program committee members see: https://socialmediaandsociety.org/about

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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