Crisis of Truth?
The Digital Era and the Future of Knowledge

A two-day symposium hosted by Academic Writing Lab (AWL) and Dept. Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), IIIT-Delhi

August 2021

Abstract

The emergence of digital space as a new culture of knowledge generation and dissemination, prompts critical introspection on the new possibilities of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption. Does the digital also alter the very character of such knowledge—for instance, its truth conditions? What implications do these new modes of interaction and knowledge production have for the notion of the 'public sphere'; for an emerging 'digital commons', and therefore, for what has been recognised as the 'democratic potential of the internet'?

This symposium aims to address these concerns, which stem from the larger societal, political, and technological context in which the digital is embedded, while also being transformed in relation to the possibilities that digital space opens up, as well as perhaps, those that it forecloses.

Issues that might be discussed include (but are not limited to):

1. Digital space and the Culture of knowledge communication - How and in what ways has the culture of reading and publishing experienced a transition in the last decade, especially with digitalisation? How and in what ways has the culture of reading and publishing experienced a transition in the last decade, and the implication of the ongoing digitalisation since the Covid-19 pandemic? What implications does online publication have for the 'digital commons' and democratic access to knowledge?

2. Digital Nudges and/or click bait: What implications does 'nudging', or in its negative connotation, 'click bait' have with respect the manipulation of 'choice' in the digital sphere? How do these impinge on the democratic or politically emancipatory potential of the internet, especially in light of the rise of surveillance capitalism?

3. The 'real' and the 'virtual': Does the traditional conception of a 'knowledge claim', based on the notions of 'truth', 'evidence' and rational argumentation, undergo a fundamental transformation with the increased blurring of the 'real' and the 'virtual', public and the private etc.? Does the pervasiveness of the virtual sphere usher in a 'post-truth' conception of 'knowledge' in a critical reflective manner, as some have argued, or does it merely spawn new modes of unreflective immersion and manipulation of the masses?

4. Digital knowledge space and participation - In what ways does the digital era bring in big data and new computational methods, and how do these impinge on the Social Sciences and Humanities? Is the collection of 'big data', (and the very concept of data as such) always 'neutral' or 'objective'? What is the relationship between big data (or 'information') and knowledge; how do they shape and determine each other?

5. Digital space and political innovation - What is the relevance of digital public spaces in the increasing impact of the virtual public sphere on politics? How might the effect of the digital environment on politics challenge the consensus around 'truth' and what are its implications for democracy?

6. The Digital and Dissent - How does digital space incorporate dissent as a democratising force? What relevance does dissent acquire in the age surveillance and how do conceptions of satyagraha 'truth force' or 'speaking truth to power' take shape in the digital era? How does it facilitate the voices arguing and counter-arguing for and against concepts like ethnic identity and nationalism in an era marked by the enforcement and vigilance of the state?

Those interested in participating are invited to submit a 200 word abstract for a 30-minute slot (20 minutes presentation and 10 minutes discussion) by March 31, 2021. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by mid-April 2021. Full-papers accepted for the symposium could range up to 5000 – 6000 words (excluding references) and will be required to be submitted by July 2021. Selected papers to be published in partnership with a major journal or academic media outlet.

The symposium will be held at the SSH dept, Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (IIIT-D), India. Given the circumstances, most likely we will host it online.
Please send your proposal as an attachment prepared for blind review to awl@iiitd.ac.in