

Introduction to the 2018 International Conference on Social Media and Society

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an introduction to the 2018 Proceedings of the 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 9th year, the 2018 conference is hosted by the Centre for Business Data Analytics at the Copenhagen

Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark. The Proceedings features a total of 60 papers, including both full and work-in-progress papers (the acceptance rate for 2018 is 43%).

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

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SMSociety '18, July 18–20, 2018, Copenhagen, Denmark

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ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-6334-1/18/07...\$15.00

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3217804.3217891>

ACM Reference format:

Anatoliy Gruzd, Jenna Jacobson, Philip Mai, Jeff Hemsley, K. Hazel Kwon, Ravi Vatrappu, Anabel Quan-Haase, Luke Sloan, and Jaigris Hodson. 2018. Introduction to the 2018 International Conference on Social Media & Society. In Proceedings of the *International Conference on Social Media & Society*, Copenhagen, Denmark (SMSociety). DOI: [10.1145/3217804.3217891](https://doi.org/10.1145/3217804.3217891)

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 9th year, the 2018 conference is being held in Copenhagen, Denmark at the Copenhagen Business School from July 18–20, 2018.

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 5 panels, 6 workshops, 55 posters, and 62 full and work-in-progress papers—with an overall acceptance rate of 43% in 2018. The wide-ranging topics in social media showcase quantitative and qualitative research from scholars working in many fields including Communication, Computer Science, Education, Information Science, Journalism, Management, Political Science, and Sociology.

The 2018 Proceedings include 60 published papers (full and work-in-progress) on various topics, including:

- Activism
- Algorithms & Echo-Chambers
- Dark Side
- 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: NETWORKED INFLUENCE AND VIRALITY

Powered by networked influence and made possible by privately-owned social media platforms, we are said to be in a sharing economy. We are now owning less and sharing more, giving and receiving crowdsourced content, adapting, innovating, remaking, and re-sharing original and remixed materials. New attitudes, practices, and legal precedents about ownership, rights, and information evaluation are emerging with the growing use of social media. The joys of sharing and connecting through social media—as amateur music videos inspire responses or the sharing of cute animal videos brings joy to millions—are tempered with concerns about the manipulation and exploitation of social media data. In 2012, in the wake of Occupy and the Arab Spring, the #SMSociety community explored networked influence and virality, and saw social media and viral events as a democratizing force. Fast forward six years and we find ourselves in quite a different and, some would argue, darker social media landscape where those same democratizing forces are now being exploited in ways we could not foresee. Hateful, anti-social speech, coordinated misinformation campaigns (i.e. “fake news”), and “false flag” operation by actors unknown now dominate the news cycle and compete for an opportunity to “go viral.” With the rapid change on social media platforms and their affordances, the heightened emphasis on mobile and visual communication, the rise of bots, and the increased participation of state actors, we believe it is time to revisit the ideas of Networked Influence and Virality once more [1]. Thus, this year's conference asks:

- How do ideas spread online? What are the outcomes of the viral spread of news, memes, content, and creative production?
- Who are the new influencers and power players in the information landscape of social media?
- How important are bots in this landscape? How do bots act as social actors? In what ways are they transforming social media?
- Algorithmic filtering is now the norm on all major social media platforms; how has the implementation changed the user experience?

- What are the impacts of misinformation and propaganda on elections, commerce, and the attention economy?
- Is faster, frictionless communication still an ideal to strive for or have we gone too far? Do we need to reintroduce some frictions back to social media platforms?
- How do corporate interests, activities, sales, and profit motivations drive or otherwise affect sharing practices?
- What are the characteristics of contemporary social media practices that drive the need for new laws, sharing conventions, censorship, rights to be heard and to be forgotten?
- Do social media users understand, or are they even aware of, the ethical considerations related to sharing, and re-mixing content on social media?
- How do users evaluate information received through social media?
- How does viral culture affect policy, power dynamics, corporations, activists, and personal interests?
- What new methodologies, tools, and frameworks can researchers bring to bear in studying the flow of information on social media?
- How do sharing, memes, and viral events contribute to theory-building about our society?

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: CHALLENGING DEMOCRACIES FROM ZUCKERBERG TO TRUMP AND BEYOND

This year, we are delighted to have Prof. Karine Nahon as the 2018 Keynote. Nahon is the elected president of the Israel Internet Association (ISOC-IL), an Associate Professor of Information Science in the Lauder School of Government and Ofer School of Communications at the Interdisciplinary Center at Herzliya (IDC), Israel, and an Affiliated Associate Professor in the Information School at University of Washington (UW). In 2017, Nahon was named #24 on Forbes' list of 50 Most Influential Women in Israel, and on the list of the 100 most influential people on digital of the Israeli Digital Association.

In Nahon's keynote, "Challenging Democracies: From Zuckerberg to Trump and Beyond," she analyzes the inequalities and biases in participation, representation and intermediation in democratic regimes, while taking into account the power struggles over hegemony of

platforms, governments, collectives and individuals on (and via) social media and internet.

PLENARY PANEL: ACCESSING SOCIAL MEDIA DATA AFTER CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

The plenary panel, "Accessing Social Media Data After Cambridge Analytica," responds to the change by Facebook to tighten access to the Application Programming Interface (APIs) on various social media platforms. The panel argues that these changes essentially lock out third parties—like researchers who conduct research in the public interest to analyze the impact of these platforms in society. As a consequence of the new API policies, these platforms are further black-boxed, which further consolidates the platforms' unchecked power. The panel is comprised of five scholars who lead the public letter [2] to advocate for a reorganization of the relationship between academic researchers and platforms to afford open and transparent data-driven research, which has since generated hundreds of supporting signatures from around the world. The panel includes the following invited speakers (listed alphabetically):

- Research Director Anja Bechmann
DATALAB & Fellow at Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, Aarhus University
Co-Chair, Association of Internet Researchers' Ethics Working Group and Project, "Internet Research Ethics 3.0"
- Professor Axel Bruns
Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology
President, Association of Internet Researchers
- Professor Anatolij Gruzd
Canada Research Chair in Social Media Data Stewardship
Director of Research, Social Media Lab
Associate Professor, Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University
- Professor Kelly Quinn
Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Professor Richard Rogers
Digital Methods Initiative, University of Amsterdam
Academic Director, Netherlands Research School for Media Studies

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 2018 Organizing Committee includes:

Conference Chairs

Anatoliy Gruzd, Ryerson University, Canada
Jenna Jacobson, Ryerson University, Canada
Philip Mai, Ryerson University, Canada

Local Host Chair

Ravi Vatrappu, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

WIP 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

Jagrish 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 2018 Advisory Board includes:

William H. Dutton, Michigan State University, USA
Susan Halford, University of Southampton, UK
Zizi Papacharissi, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA
Barry Wellman, NetLab Network & Social Media Lab,
Ryerson University, Canada

CONFERENCE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The 2018 Programs Committee includes 62 scholars coming from 18 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 committee members see: <http://socialmediaandsociety.org/about/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all of the contributing authors and peer reviewers who ensured the high quality of papers at the conference. We would also like to thank Andrea Kampen, Carlisle Kent, and Priya Kumar for their editorial assistance in preparing the Proceedings. Finally, we thank the Copenhagen Business School for hosting the conference.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anatoliy Gruzd and Barry Wellman. 2014. Networked influence in social media: Introduction to the special issue. *American Behavioral Scientist* 58 (10), 1251–1259.
- [2] *Facebook shuts the gate after the horse has bolted, and hurts real research in the process*. 2018, Apr. 25. Available at: <http://socialmedialab.ca/2018/facebook-shuts-the-gate-after-the-horse-has-bolted-and-hurts-real-research-in-the-process/> [Accessed June 1, 2018].