

Diving Into The Dissonance

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Info 200: Blog Post 3 – Disrupting Life In the Round

Posted on [October 1, 2018](#) by [Jason Weekley](#)

The role of social media and other internet technologies in social movements has been written about extensively in the past decade. Conclusions drawn by scholars have ranged from its usefulness to movements to that these tools may actually help authoritarian governments (Tufekci, 2012). Whatever conclusion is drawn about its efficacy, what is of interest from a library and information perspective, is how people use social media and internet technologies to use, find, and create information. Several types of information seeking behavior emerges from this research, but of particular interest is the role of information encountering and how it crosses into the small information worlds that people create.

Information encountering happens when people are looking for information on one subject but “bump” into some other

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piece of information accidentally (Erdelez, 1998). What a person does with this new information is dependent on who encounters the information, where it is encountered, and what information is encountered. Social media acts as an information encountering platform. When a person scrolls through their feeds, they are constantly bumping into new information. With each new information encounter, the user decides what to do with this new piece of information. They can ignore it and continue onto the next encounter, or they can choose to engage it.

Social media information encounters play a significant role in the mobilization of social movements. In a study of real-time participants during a protest against overpopulation in Singapore, Pang and Goh (2016) found that social media played a significant role in the dissemination of the protest; most participants heard about the protest through Facebook, Twitter, and miscellaneous blogs. However, participants had mixed motivations for participating in the protest. The study found that only half of the protesters that participated in their survey had a clear intention of supporting the protest and its cause while a little over a third of them were there to seek more information. They also found that about 15 percent of those surveyed were there because of friends or family, or simply because they happened to be passing by and were drawn in to the crowd.

In an earlier study, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) found that social media played an influential role on individuals in their decision to protest in Egypt during the Arab Spring. They surveyed over a 1,000 people who were actively engaged in the protests to determine the demographics of who was protesting, their internet use in general and for protest purposes, and how did they hear about and decide to

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participate in the protest. They found that although half of the participants found out about the demonstrations through face to face communication, more than a quarter found out about it through Facebook, significantly more than through traditional media sources.

Information encounters facilitate the crossing of small world boundaries. Chatman's "small world" concept refers to the idea that communities are formed based on shared interests and expectations where information seeking resolves around normative behaviors (Savolainen, 2010). The purpose of social movements is to disrupt the small world communities that subscribe to the normative behaviors of civil society. Social information allows dissenting information to break into these information silos. As the two case studies above show, social media information encounters disrupted the everyday life information seeking behavior of life in the world and allows dissenting information to break into these information silos.

References

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One thought on “Info 200: Blog Post 3 – Disrupting Life In the Round”



Michael Stephens says:

October 11, 2018 at 4:53 pm

Your citations from the two journals indicate there is some rich literature out there on your community. Be sure to use the Tufekci book as well in the lit review and paper.

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