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John Mair, Tor Clark, Neil Fowler, Raymond Snoddy, Richard Tait (eds)
Anti-Social Media? The Impact on Journalism and Society

Bury St Edmunds: Abramis, 2018. 319 pp ISBN 978-1845497293

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Anti-Social Media? The Impact on Journalism and Society is a collection of articles examining the main issues with the emergence and proliferation of social media, such as fake news, the decline in the news media's monopoly over advertising, trolling and harassment, and echo chambers.

Looking at the relationship between the journalism industry and social media, with an eye on possible future regulation, as well as tech giants' responsibilities, *Anti-Social Media?* features some insightful research in the realms of trolling and cyber harassment, as well as frameworks to face the current crisis in online news consumption and interaction behaviours. For example, Sean Dodson's research into the sources of left-wing site *The Canary* paints a fascinating picture of news aggregation, revealing the site's preferred source is *The Guardian* - despite being the subject of the #BoycottTheGuardian campaign by *The Canary* itself.

Denis Muller provides a conservative but sound theory of media ethics for the digital age. Open Discourse Theory encourages mainstream media to reiterate its gate-keeping function, providing reliable, fact-checked news. Yet although this approach is one of the most popular adopted to fight fake news, it does not take the broader social context of fake news' developing popularity into account. Indeed, various researchers have found that the growth in fake news originates from distrust in elites and feelings of uncertainty as much as they do from social media news consumption.

Christian Fuchs provides a framework to socialise anti-social media, including banning politically targeted advertising in single national jurisdictions and breaking up social media companies' monopoly over online targeted advertising. Meanwhile, Alan Geere visits and speaks to key players within regional newspapers' newsrooms, finding that new approaches to journalism, such as more multi-tasking, new tools and new skills, are now required from those in the profession.

Under the umbrella of trolling and cyber harassment, both Amy Binns' studies (the first co-authored with Martin Bateman, the second with John Mair) delve into political trolls and Twitter hate campaign speech respectively, utilising tweets collected in real time to examine the abuse directed at politicians and public figures such as Gina Miller in the post-Jo Cox and post-Brexit scenarios. These two studies in particular raise awareness about a worrying trend of public online vilification that can

potentially influence violent crimes to move from the keyboard and into the real world. In another valuable contribution provided by speaking to both seasoned and junior journalists, Claire Wolfe shares their fears and reactions to trolling on their articles by creating a new toolkit to prepare for and survive the profession in the age of cyber harassment.

A breath of fresh air amongst the general “doom and gloom” theme, Faith Gordon and Paul Reilly’s research examines how social media platforms have been used in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of paramilitary violence and of the paramilitary’s social media shaming tactics towards marginalised groups.

These however are only a few articles in a collection that generally feels crowded and confused in its overarching theme focusing on the effect that the emergence of social media has had on journalism and the public sphere. The latest publication coming out of the Abramis ‘Hackademic’ series, *Anti-Social Media?* does not clarify whether it wants to be an insight on the media industry provided by its insiders, or a book showcasing new research on the dark side of social media.

Featuring contributions from journalists, researchers, and media professionals, *Anti-Social Media?* at times reads like a eulogy of a dying journalism industry, still loved and revered by its own members, who quote each other at length, drawing from articles that already appear in the collection. What most authors in the book seem to agree on is that the current business model for the journalism industry does not work, and that social media’s potential seen during the Arab Spring has brought by something darker than expected. But the book reads more like a selection of anecdotes, views and snappy, quotable one-liners rather than a research collection following a common thread.

Ironically for a book that dwells on the pervasive effects of news aggregation, *Anti-Social Media?* aggregates plenty of quotable snippets and information on the issues at play that will without doubt be cited in many an essay, but that do not provide an original analysis framework or, indeed, any new research data to the landscape of social media studies. Additionally, it is frankly quite appalling that, in the current vast media and research landscape, a book comprising 48 articles only features three pieces identified as being solely authored by women.