

Project Report

* indicates a required field

Research Title

Freedom of speech on the internet - where do we draw the line?

This question is read only.

Please provide a short summary of the work that was completed as part of this project / research *

The objective of this research was to aid understanding about the ongoing debates relating to freedom of speech on the internet at a time of rising concern about negative online behaviour such as hate speech. Conducted mainly during my time as a Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute, UK, the project involved the gathering of scholarly literature about freedom of speech, negative online behaviour, internet regulation and an emerging field of online counterspeech. Analysis of data involved the linguistic examination of online counterspeech in response to overt racist comments on a YouTube platform and resulted in the identification of a taxonomy of counter speech initiatives used by commenters. The intention is to develop this work further to educate and inform internet users about effective ways in responding to negative online behaviours. But it also provides insights into discussion about internet regulation and free speech as well. The preliminary findings were presented to other academics (staff and students) at the universities of Swansea, Lancaster and Oxford during 2019 and more recently has been written up for publication.

Describe the 'who, what, where, when and why' of your initiative

Timing

Is your project / research complete? *

Yes No

If your initiative is still in progress, pick 'no'

Start Date

02/07/2018

Must be a date.

Finish Date

29/03/2019

Must be a date.

Milestones

What have been the major steps / stages (i.e. milestones) involved in delivering your initiative to date?

Milestone

Description

Data analysis

My time at the Oxford Internet Institute gave me the opportunity to work on this research which was a new area of interest for me, but one that was relevant and topical both within academia and beyond.

Networking and presentations	I was invited to give presentations about my research at three universities in the UK (Oxford, Swansea & Lancaster). In addition I was able to expand my academic networks amongst the internet research community. Being located in the UK enabled me to meet others with similar or overlapping research, attend stimulating talks eg weekly presentations at OII, Reuters Research Institute on online journalism, and a lecture by Vint Cerf at Oxford University.
Outputs	I published an opinion piece emanating from my building of knowledge about free speech online in relation to the recent Christchurch attacks. I also completed a paper for submission to an academic journal on my research.
e.g. planning; major activities; evaluation	

Outcomes

What outcomes were generated as a result of this project / research?

Outcomes are the changes that have occurred for the beneficiaries of your initiative. Generally outcomes can be framed as an increase or decrease in one or more of the following:

- Skills, knowledge, confidence, aspiration, motivation, (these are generally **immediate** or short-term outcomes)
- Actions, behaviour, change in policy (these are generally **intermediate** or medium-term outcomes)
- Social, financial, environmental, physical conditions (these are generally **long-term** outcomes)

Immediate outcomes occur directly following an activity (e.g. within 1 month); intermediate outcomes are those that fall between the immediate and long-term (e.g. between 1 month and 2 years); and long-term outcomes are those we expect to see years later (e.g. 2, 5, 10 or 50 years after the activity).

We also want to learn more about how you tracked the outcomes of your initiative - what you measured and how.

If you need more help understanding what outcomes are, read the help sheets at www.ourcommunity.com.au/evaluation

List your initiative's outcomes and attached information in the following table. Leave blank any fields that do not apply to your project.

Outcome	Were these outcomes anticipated?	Timeframe	Indicator	Verification Method
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Identification of counterspeech initiatives for further development	Anticipated	Intermediate	Analysis of online comments	Acceptance of paper for publication in academic peer reviewed journal
Contribution to public knowledge	Anticipated	Intermediate	Publication in The Conversation	Accessible on The Conversation website
Contribution to research community	Anticipated	Intermediate	Presentations	Institution emails, recording of presentations
Response	Unanticipated	Intermediate	Public debate in response to my article in The Conversation	The Conversation website analytics indicate 186 comments posted within a 72 hour period
Global interest	Unanticipated	Intermediate	Reposting of my article in The Conversation	Website analytics indicate as of 1 May 3871 readers of this piece viewed from around the world, twitter and Facebook
Academic interest in the research	Anticipated	Intermediate	Publication in an academic journal	Acceptance of paper for review
Contribution to public discussion relating to the Christchurch attack	Unanticipated	Intermediate	Increase in public debate	Calls from media and requests to join stakeholder discussion groups on the Christchurch Call for Action
Outcomes are the changes that you believe were generated or influenced by your initiative. See information above.	Choose from the list	Choose from the list (see description above)	What you used to measure this outcome - e.g. 'change in teenage pregnancy rates from x to y'	e.g. survey; interviews; focus groups

What (if anything) did you change in your approach and practices as your project research proceeded, and why? *

As a result of my scholarly investigation into the tension between hate speech and freedom of speech in online environments, I discovered that counterspeech was an under-researched area and decided a focus on this could lead to emancipatory outcomes. I found this to be significant because of the current global discussions about internet regulation between tech

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companies, governments and free speech advocates. Analysis of different counterspeech initiatives in responding to online abuse was worthy of further investigation because it offers an alternative to the deletion of material through internet regulation which is an ongoing topic of debate. The analysis of the data was more time consuming than anticipated as I was the sole researcher. I see this work as an ongoing project along with other researchers in developing counter speech strategies that can be used to assist people in developing their digital skills when it comes to responding to negative online behaviours.

We may use this information to help inform others undertaking similar work

What did you learn as a result of undertaking this project/program? *

Conducting my research while on research and study leave at an overseas academic institution (i.e. the Oxford Internet Institute), away from the distractions of teaching and administrative work in New Zealand, went well beyond my expectations. In Oxford I had the opportunity to meet and network with a wide range of academics with similar interests. This not only brought new insights to my work, but also enabled me to contribute to the research culture there. It also drew attention to New Zealand, research, my university (AUT) and InternetNZ. Although the financial cost of being based at Oxford was high (accommodation/overheads/travel), this stimulating environment had multiple benefits as I was able to attend lectures/presentations of leaders in their field and had access to many different libraries and resources. I also received useful feedback on my work. Although not part of my project, lectures to postgraduate students at OII that I attended provided me with ideas and possibilities to introduce into my own lectures on internet phenomenon and new media at AUT. As far as the timing of my research goes, the unanticipated event of the attacks on the Christchurch mosques meant my project's relevancy and significance were heightened. I was able to contribute to the public debate through the publication of an opinion piece on The Conversation website which has a global audience and inspired discussion and debate through the comments section. Overall I see the research, conducted with the support of InternetNZ, as heralding the start of my work in this new field of counter speech and which I intend to develop further. It provides opportunities to inform decision and policy makers, media and other groups interested in this topic.

We are particularly interested in lessons that may help others undertaking similar work. Think about what you learned about your inputs (money, skills, personnel, time - too much; too little; about right?); your assumptions (were they 100% right, only partly right, or were the results a complete surprise?); and the context of the project/program (timing; targeted beneficiaries; geographic settings - were they right; wrong; about right?)

How will you share your learnings from this project/research? *

I was able to share my initial research findings at three universities in the United Kingdom during my time there. I have already had one publication of an opinion piece that draws on my research and thinking about hate speech and free speech on the internet, and an article for a academic journal has been submitted. I intend to present my work in New Zealand and I am also contributing to the dialogue on ways to support the implementation of the Christchurch Call to Action hosted by InternetNZ. In September 2019 I will be on a panel (Global Discourses (and Counter Discourses) of Hostility in the Social Media Age, at the 5th European Society for Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Dialogue in Italy. My intention is to draw together academics across disciplines with similar interests to build a more comprehensive and connected field for counter speech research. The findings from my project therefore have reached a wide audience covering academia and the wider publics.

What mediums were used to share the learnings? Have you reached the audience you expected?

We'd love to see some visual and audio representations of your work. Please share below.

Upload files:

Filename: IMG_5375.jpg
 File size: 2.1 MB

and/or

Provide web link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj22JGrjix4>
 Must be a URL

and/or

Provide additional details:

Photograph Philippa Smith, Visiting Fellow, Oxford Internet Institute with one of the founders of the internet Vint Cerf.

The URL link is of my presentation of my research at the Oxford Internet Institute on 28 November, 2018: "Freedom of speech on the internet - where do we draw the line?"

The article on The Conversation can be found here:
<https://theconversation.com/the-challenge-of-drawing-a-line-between-objectionable-material-and-freedom-of-expression-online-108764>

Please include captions, if relevant

Can we use your media content in our own communications?

Yes No Please contact us first
 e.g. in our annual report

Financial Report

* indicates a required field

Project Income & Expenditure

Please provide details of any project income (funds received) and project expenditure (funds spent) to date.

Use the 'Notes' column to provide any additional information you think we should be aware of.

Income Description	Income Type	Confirmed Funding?	Income Amount (\$)	Notes
Sabbatical Funds	Earned Income*	Confirmed*	\$6,649.00	Source AUT
Personal funds	Earned Income	Confirmed	\$5,417.00	
InternetNZ	Other Income	Confirmed	\$6,686.00	

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Expenditure Description	Expenditure Type	Expenditure Amount (\$)	Notes
Rtn airfares Akl-London	Other Expenditure *	\$3,348.00	
Travel agent and insurance fees	Administrative and Infrastructure	\$494.00	
Oxford Internet Institute overheads for visiting fellow (3 months)	Overheads	\$2,850.00	
Oxford Accommodation	Other Expenditure	\$12,000.00	
London-Oxford train rtn	Other Expenditure	\$60.00	

Income and Expenditure Totals

Total Income Amount	Total Expenditure Amount	Income - Expenditure
\$18,752.00 This number/amount is calculated.	\$18,752.00 This number/amount is calculated.	\$0.00 This number/amount is calculated.

Have you experienced any issues with your intended project budget to date? If so, please explain reasons for any major variances or for providing incomplete information:

Certification and Feedback

Feedback

You are now nearing the end of this form. Before you review your application and click the **SUBMIT** button please take a few moments to provide some feedback. (If you would rather provide anonymous feedback, please go to **{{ Grantmakers: provide a link to an anonymous survey or delete this sentence }}**)

Please indicate how you found the acquittal process:

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neutral
- Difficult
- Very Difficult

How many minutes in total did it take you to complete this form?

90

Estimate in minutes (i.e. 1 hour = 60 minutes)

Please provide us with your suggestions about any improvements and/or additions to this form that you think we need to consider:

