Module 1: Video 1 - Discovery: finding problematic content online (Transcripts)

So in this session I'm going to start talking about discovery and so that might mean that you work on our breaking news desk and something happens and you have to quickly find eyewitnesses, sources, content that you could use in your output or it could be discovery because you are monitoring disinformation and you want to see what kind of rumors and conspiracies are being circulated. In so in either way this is about how you stay on top of different accounts, pages and groups on social networks. So I could actually run a five day workshop on that. So this is basically surface level, but I think this is a good introduction to the types of things that you need to know. So social monitoring is really the practice of systematically monitoring feeds of social network data for notable content. Now feeds are monitored by humans, computers or some combination of the two. But the problem is when computers cannot detect notebook content with sufficient accuracy, which right now is almost always, human judgment spans the difference. So often people say oh artificial intelligence can do this. Unfortunately we kind of need humans to program what kind of lists and content and accounts people should be following whether that's people or computers. So we're not yet at the point where computers can do this fully, which means you need to understand how this how to do this yourself.

So when it comes to feeds they have to be filtered and ordered. So your output is only as good as your inputs. So I would say to journalists it's worth spending as much time as you feasibly have to build really good lists whether that's on CrowdTangle, which I'm going to talk about later. Whether that's on TweetDeck. You want to be monitoring lists of accounts on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and so it is worth doing proper research into which are the most effective accounts to monitor. So it could be that your local journalist and you want to build that really good list of all of your local police departments, fire departments, government officials you know those kind of lists take time to put together. But then if there is an event in your region all of a sudden you've got the most amazing list that you can draw from.

So how do we populate our feeds. It's a mixture of search queries and lists. So we talked a little bit about lists and that's you thinking, who do I want on these lists? Who are the best accounts to have on these lists? Search queries are about what words do people actually use. So too often in newsrooms journalists will search for words that they would use but they're not the words that people themselves would use. And so you want to have as complicated search queries as you can to make sure that you don't miss anything. So again we're gonna talk a little bit more about that.

So let's start with Twitter. So when you're looking for content and conversations on Twitter you might be searching for websites, words or phrases, hashtags people or organizations. So think about all these different ways and sometimes before you even log on to Twitter it's worth on your notebook or with post it notes going through all the different things that you might want to monitor before you start getting to the computer. And that's just being good at thinking about keywords. And if you haven't done this already make sure that you've looks at the Boolean

search queries on Twitter. You might have done this on Google, but actually on Twitter too. In the search box at the top you can actually put it in pretty complex search queries if you know the different things so maybe that's what it's called bunny ears which is making sure that you're specifically searching for a term or it could be the 'all' or 'and' it could be the minus symbol. So you take out words that are constantly come up but you know it's not the words that you want. So I would recommend going to look at the Boolean search queries on Twitter and also make sure that you bookmark the advanced Twitter search. The advance Twitter search page allows you to look at a lot of this.

So these kind of things can make a real difference to your search queries and here's an example of very, very complex search string that we used during election land actually when we were monitoring election integrity issues on social media. And as you can see here by using parentheses and 'and' and 'or' you can get a lot of content at the same time you can make sure you don't get content that you're not interested in. And this is trial or error. I remember spending a number of hours trying to come up with this search query and work out the kind of words that people were using in posts about the way that they were voting.

So the other thing about Twitter is Twitter lists which are really really powerful. Now unfortunately there isn't a mechanism on Twitter itself to search for lists. So one of the best ways of doing this is actually going to Google and searching site:twitter.com/*/lists and then putting in your keywords. That might sound complicated but why so powerful is why recreate list when other very smart people and especially journalists have created really good lists themselves. So if you're searching for a list of politicians in Chicago, I promise you somebody has already made that list. And so by searching Google in this way the little asterisks means it doesn't matter who was created it. It will find a list. So it's a really amazing way of finding lists. And so I would definitely suggest you practice that. The other way is that you go to people that you know and you look at their lists. And so it could be for example if you're interested in humanitarian work, you might go to somebody who works for the UN and look at the lists that they have created or you might really think a political journalist for The New York Times is incredible. Go to their page and look at the list they have created and you can subscribe to those lists.

And finally this another really easy tool to use, it's called ElectoralHQ.com. And you can search for Twitter lists on there. And that actually ranks them by the number of subscribers they have. So you want a Twitter list that has got a good number of people and a good number of subscribers. And this is a tool that was just created by somebody, somebody who just got home created the code put it on github, but you can actually take two lists and merge them together so you could take somebody else's lists and then add in your own people. So again start from a good basis and then add in other people. And sometimes that's because a list was good two years ago but it needs updating.

OK so let's now talk about Facebook and Instagram. So it's much harder to search within Facebook and Instagram but it's definitely worth trying. Because in many parts of the world you

can find really incredible content on Facebook. So Facebook is native search only matches on pages and group names and descriptions. It doesn't search posts which makes it a bit harder. It also doesn't support search operators. So sometimes we would recommend again using Google to do the same as we did before. So Site:Facebook.com/groups or /pages or /events. You can then search within that in a way that means that more quality content comes back. So in the same way here because you're doing on Google you can put the minus sign in. You can use those search operators like bunny ears that you couldn't use in other places.

The same goes for Instagram. So here on the screen you can see the Boolean search queries that you want to use to search within Instagram. Instagram has a really poor search functionality other than hashtag searches, so this is something again you can you can search particularly for posts or accounts or names and descriptions.

Very quickly let's talk about YouTube again. YouTube doesn't have lots of advance searches but there is a way that you can do advanced search filters. So again you can see here on the screen how you can do that and that means that you could search for the length of the video and other descriptors of a video. So again if you're searching for certain types of content, YouTube is so massive it's very hard to do. And again sometimes I use Google as a way to search within YouTube.

And Reddit, again often forgotten, but there can be some really useful content on Reddit and particular on certain forums. So for example in terms of disinformation sometimes the forum The Donald on Reddit can be full of all sorts of things that might be interesting from a journalistic perspective. So when you want to find SubReddits use the blue search bar at the top of the SubReddit search and search in that way and you can find all sorts of things. And I would I would recommend if you haven't spent time on Reddit to do that because you might be surprised by what you see.