

Education, population, poverty, tax...getting views on topics like those in Jersey isn't the difficult part – but have you ever noticed how many people sound eminently credible when talking about them, even though they may actually be basing their views on conjecture, false facts and blind guesswork?

There is a real danger in making the 'facts' fit the opinion, rather than the other way around – which is exactly the point at which someone with an eye on the latest buzzwords will smugly insert the phrase 'post-truth' into the conversation, imagining its actually helpful.

So, we've asked the Jersey Policy Forum to add some robust material to those crucial local debates – the point is not to provoke agreement or acquiescence; it is to provide reliable material on which others can build their views.



Gailina Liew, Director, Jersey Policy Forum

What's happening to the World Wide Web?

On March 12, 2019, the World Wide Web had its 30th birthday. Most of us probably went about our usual business and didn't pay much attention; but there was a little flurry of attention in the media, and Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web and founder of the Web Foundation, had some interesting things to say.

"Thirty years ago, I submitted a vague but exciting proposal for a free open permission-less space for all of humanity to share knowledge and ideas. Today, half the world's population is still unconnected and those of us who are online feel that our rights and freedoms are not fully protected and respected. The fight for the web we want is one of the most important causes of our time."

The internet, and the World Wide Web (or "web" for short) are actually two different things. The internet was invented in 1969 to allow computers to be able to communicate

and connect to each other, and through networks. In very simple terms, information could be sent from one computer to another across a growing array of connections, but there was no easy way to access this network (now we have search engines) and there was no space to store information (now we have websites). Sir Tim's invention of the World Wide Web, and launch in 1989, changed that, and in his words:

"the web has become a public square, a library, a doctor's office, a shop, a school, a design studio, an office, a cinema, a bank, and so much more. Of course, with every new feature, every new website, the divide between those who are online and those who are not increases, making it all the more imperative to make the web available for everyone. And while the web has created opportunity, given marginalized groups a voice, and made our daily lives easier, it has also created opportunity for

scammers, given a voice to those who spread hatred, and made all kinds of crime easier to commit."

Some online research (Sir Tim's vision in action!) revealed the following data that might be worth some reflection to understand how our access to information is being influenced by a very few dominant players (Sir Tim is concerned about this).

According to Global Stats, the global market share of internet search and social media in February 2019 was:

Search Engine	Global Market Share (%)
Google	92.92
bing	2.38
Yahoo!	1.79
Baidu	1.03
YANDEX RU	0.55
DuckDuckGo	0.38



THINK-TANK

2. System design that creates perverse incentives where user value is sacrificed, such as ad-based revenue models that commercially reward clickbait and the viral spread of misinformation.

3. Unintended negative consequences of benevolent design, such as the outraged and polarised tone and quality of online discourse.

In Sir Tim's words:

"...while the first category is impossible to eradicate completely, we can create both laws and code to minimize this behavior, just as we have always done offline. The second category requires us to redesign systems in a way that change incentives. And the final category calls for research to understand existing systems and model possible new ones or tweak those we already have. You can't just blame one government, one social network or the human spirit. Simplistic narratives risk exhausting our energy as we chase the symptoms of these problems instead of focusing on their root causes. To get this right, we will need to come together as a global web community."

According to Internet World Stats, as of June 2018, roughly 4.2 billion people (55.1% of the world's population) could access the web. There are many more

statistics and issues that are worth thinking about (negative impacts on mental health, growing social isolation, risk of reliance on monopoly/oligopoly for access would be just a few) but the key point that Sir Tim highlights is perhaps best captured in his call to action:

"The web is for everyone and collectively we hold the power to change it. It won't be easy. But if we dream a little and work a lot, we can get the web we want."

It's about people working together towards a common vision and defining a new contract for use that everyone can understand and respect. See <https://webfoundation.org/2018/11/join-us-and-fight-fortheweb/> for more information on this topic.

What do you think? What can we do in Jersey? Share your thoughts with the Jersey Policy Forum by email to contact@jerseypolicyforum.org

Social Media Platform	Global Market Share (%)
Facebook	68.95
Pinterest	15.15
Twitter	7.41
YouTube	3.76
reddit	1.71
Instagram	1.56

Global digital ad spending is forecasted by e-marketer to rise 17.1% to \$327.28 billion in 2019, with Alibaba, Facebook and Google as the leading digital ad sellers. These three companies will account for 61.2% of the total global digital ad market. In 2019, Google will become the first digital ad seller to cross the \$100 billion mark in net digital ad revenues. Also note that Facebook owns WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Instagram; Google owns YouTube; and Tencent owns QQ, WeChat and QZone.



Image: eMarketer, September 2018

Sir Tim is worried, and disappointed, about how his invention has been used, and is particularly concerned about three main categories of use.

- Deliberate, malicious intent, such as state-sponsored hacking and attacks, criminal behavior, and online harassment.