



Workshop: Understanding and responding to digital information ecosystem threats – Exploring the intersection between our digital information ecosystem, information incidents and crisis management

ABSTRACT

How does our digital information ecosystem shape how we respond to, detect and manage crises?

From the spread of disinformation during a pandemic to a surge in bot activity drowning out important political messaging during a wildfire, the structural and dynamic dimensions of our digital information ecosystem has a critical impact on access to life-saving information prior to and during an emergency.

This workshop will explore the intersection between the digital information ecosystem (as it relates to social media and news media) and crisis management. Our aim is to contextualize this relationship together to better understand how the dynamics of information generation, sharing and consumption heavily influence our threat landscape and how we approach managing threats like natural disasters.

Key questions to address include:

- What is the digital information ecosystem?
- What is the relationship between the digital information ecosystem and emerging threats such as natural disasters?
- What are information (ecosystem) incidents and what is their relationship with other types of threats or incidents?
- How do information threats like mis/disinformation, foreign interference, and generative AI influence our risk landscape?
- How can we approach responding to and learning from information (ecosystem) incidents?
- How can we leverage academic-practitioner partnerships to bridge the information gap during an emergency response?

To address these questions, we will leverage a variety of instructional methods including collective discussion, interactive activities, and focus group discussion to further explore and evolve the subject matter. Part of our discussion will involve sharing an innovative process we have developed for conducting academic-led information incident response, soliciting feedback and opening discussion for collective engagement.

This workshop is highly interdisciplinary. We encourage open participation from novice to expert professionals, academic and/or practitioner, with any interest in the subject matter.

PRESENTER/DEMONSTRATOR

Jennie Phillips*

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Media Ecosystem Observatory, McGill University

Related experience: Academic-practitioner with expertise in disaster and emergency management, resilience, network theory, knowledge management and public education. Jennie is leading the Project on Information Ecosystem Resilience at the Media Ecosystem Observatory, and plays the Incident Commander role during information incident response.

Bio: Jennie Phillips is an academic practitioner specializing in the intersection between information and communication technologies, society and complex events ranging from humanitarian disasters to global health emergencies to human rights crises. She has her Ph.D. from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto and a Master in Education Technology from Concordia University. She has worked as a post-doctoral research fellow with the Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health (York University) and a doctoral fellow with the Citizen Lab (University of Toronto). She also taught at York University in the Disaster & Emergency Management program and is the director of the Digital Global Health & Humanitarianism Lab (DGHHLab).

Jennie consults nationally and internationally as a practitioner in education, innovation, training and research with public, academic and non-profit sectors. Clients have included the Privy Council Office/Prime Minister's Office of Canada, Global Affairs Canada, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the German Red Cross, CARE Netherlands and Dalhousie University.

Aengus Bridgman

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Related Experience: Academic-practitioner with expertise in political science, information ecosystem studies, social media analysis and data analysis. Aengus is the director of the Media Ecosystem Observatory, and leads many of the investigations associated with information incident response.

Bio: Aengus Bridgman is the Director of the Media Ecosystem Observatory and an Assistant Professor (Research) at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University. He is one of Canada's leading experts on misinformation, digital activism, and the politics of digital media.

His work has been published in The Journal of Politics, The Journal of Experimental Political Science, Party Politics, The Misinformation Review, Frontiers in Political Science, and The Canadian Journal of Political Science and featured in The New York Times, CBC, the Washington Post, the Post Millennial, Vox, La Presse, Radio-Canada, Le Devoir, and many others.

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