

# REBOOT REBUILD REIMAGINE

2021 → 2025

INSTITUTE  
FOR REBOOTING  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA

Berkman Klein Center for Internet  
& Society at Harvard University

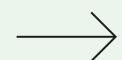
Foundations of a  
Pop-Up Institute

P4



From Prototypes  
to Panels

P12



The Anatomy of a  
Social Media Project

P24



# Table of Contents

---

1	<b>Opening Letter</b>	P2
2	<b>Programs and People: Foundations of a Pop-Up Institute</b>	P4
3	<b>By the Numbers</b>	P6
4	<b>The Reading List</b>	P8
5	<b>From Prototypes to Panels: Events That Made an Impact</b>	P12
6	<b>What's On Your Mind: The Issues That Made RSM</b>	P18
7	<b>The Anatomy of a Social Media Project</b>	P24
8	<b>Building the Field: Students at the Forefront of Social Media Research</b>	P30
9	<b>10 Questions About Social Media in 2025</b>	P34
10	<b>Thank You From Professor Jonathan Zittrain</b>	P40

---

1

# Opening Letter From the RSM Team

When the Berkman Klein Center (BKC) first launched the Institute for Rebooting Social Media—or RSM—in the fall of 2021, the world’s social media landscape had already undergone a series of radical transformations. In just a couple decades, we went from picking Top 8s on MySpace and following updates from classmates on Facebook, to navigating mis- and disinformation, political and cultural polarization, and risks to safety and mental well-being. Suddenly, social platforms were no longer just a place to chat with friends; they had become a place to inform, influence, and gain social, political and economic capital—for better and for worse.

And yet the initial opportunities of these platforms, which facilitated unique ways of expressing ourselves and creating community with people we might not otherwise have the chance to meet, remain.

Over the past three years, RSM explored many sides and perspectives on the perils and possibilities of our digital ecosystem, as well as ways to improve or enhance the online experience. Our vibrant community of faculty, fellows, staff, and students have brought their expertise and curiosity to explore new ways of thinking about the digital landscape, and how we can relate with it and within it.

Drawing from a spectrum of ideologies—and from across a range of disciplines and sectors—RSM has helped forge a path toward more serious study of social media and its

impacts on our world. Nobody expected to discover a silver bullet to fix social media, our title notwithstanding. Rather, we’ve worked to elevate these inquiries in academia and share them with the public through original research, events, and community publications; “rebooting” means reexamining, taking nothing for granted, and being open to both incremental and wholesale change. And while the Institute is coming to a close, the spirit of building a better Internet in the public interest lives on with the Applied Social Media Lab (ASML), as well as upcoming initiatives at BKC related to artificial intelligence.

The following publication highlights some of the best that the Institute offered since its inception, posing ongoing and new questions about how we interact and present ourselves online. What social media will look like ten years from now is hard to predict, but we believe we’ve laid a solid path for BKC, and the community at large, to drive innovation and research in the space for the years to come.

**- The RSM Team**

2

## Programs and People:

# Foundations of a Pop-Up Institute



2022-2023 Visiting Scholars Greg Gondwe and Yong Jin Park at BKC's 25th Anniversary.

From its inception, RSM set out to bridge the gap between the “thinkers” and the “doers,” creating a space within academia that allowed people from different disciplines and professional backgrounds to collaborate with one another. The Institute has built out a diverse community through three core programs that have directly contributed to critical discussions and remedies for how we think about and engage with online platforms.



## VISITING SCHOLARS

RSM's Visiting Scholars program began in the fall of 2022, and has since welcomed twenty-three tenured and tenure-track professors from a range of fields—including law, philosophy, computer science, journalism, and economics—to fully immerse themselves in their research over the course of a sabbatical year. During their time with RSM, the visiting Scholars developed publicly-accessible projects—including books and academic papers, conferences and events, and new tools and prototypes—aimed at articulating and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities across the social media landscape.



## RSM ASSEMBLY FELLOWSHIP

Inspired by BKC's longstanding Assembly Fellowship, the RSM Assembly Fellowship program brought together thirteen interdisciplinary researchers, entrepreneurs, and industry professionals to design new interfaces, build innovative tools, and grow communities of practice that reimagine and rework the digital social space in service of the public interest. This six-month, hybrid fellowship offered participants the opportunity to not only work on their own projects, but to develop plans to sustain and publicize their work well past their time in the program.



## EMPLOYEE FELLOWSHIP

RSM's Employee Fellowship program invited early-career academics and tech industry professionals to join the Institute's staff team as they worked to develop individual projects related to tech governance, moderation, trust and safety, and more. During their time with RSM, employee fellows developed deeper connections and collaborations with researchers across the social media field, published academic papers, and hosted public events and workshops. Alumni from the program have gone on to establish careers across industry and nonprofit organizations, including Meta, Google, and ICANN.

# By the Numbers

*By Matt Kristoffersen  
& Shelby El Otmani*

---

---

---

**23** **13** **22**

**VISITING  
SCHOLARS**

from universities across  
the U.S. and beyond

**FELLOWS**

across academia, industry,  
government, and civil society

**UNIVERSITIES  
REPRESENTED**

including University of Michigan,  
Georgetown University, and  
University of Toronto

---

---

---

**60+**

**QUOTES & REFERENCES**

in articles from outlets including *WIRED*,  
*The New York Times*, and *Bloomberg*

**80+**

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS &  
MEDIA APPEARANCES**

including events, documentaries, TV  
and podcast interviews

---

42 140+

### EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

from lunch talks to  
multiday conferences

### COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS

including books, academic articles, and  
op-eds in outlets like *The Washington Post*,  
*The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Atlantic*



*The 2023-2024 RSM Visiting Scholars cohort.*

6,000+

### NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

for program updates and news from the community

3

We Need a Germ Theory for the Internet • How to fix Twitter and Facebook • **Technology of the Oppression** • A Close Friendship, and More to Maintain It • TikTok Ban Could Upend Global App Economy • Data Sovereignty and the Disinformation Crisis • **Uncommon Knowledge** • When the Digital Services Act Goes Global • Online Civil Society Organizations • Children's Best Interests in a Digital World • Can AI Outsmart Fake News? • **Algorithmic Limits on Platform Optimization to Protect Population Health** • Twitter Is Not Rocket Science • Polluting Society. Moderation Alone Won't Fix the Problem • "Did They Consent to That?" • Loneliness and the Impact • Misinformation and Digital Inequalities: Comparing How Different Demographic Groups Get Effective Pastime to Potential National Security Threat • Threads of Wisdom • The Right to Information in the Interventions for Online Harassment of Journalists • When It Comes to Facial Recognition, There Is Artificial Intelligence, Journalism, and the Ubuntu Robot in Sub-Saharan Africa • With the End of the Hostile Takeover, How 236,471 Words of Amici Briefing Gave Us the 565 Word Gonzalez Decision • **The Algorithmic Knowledge Gap** • How the Supreme Court could alter the way Americans interact on the internet • What to Do About the Marginalized Voices in the Tech Industry • Unpacking the Oral Argument in Murthy v. Missouri • How to Protect Journalists from Online Abuse • **Social Media** • From Emergency to Prevention: Protecting Journalists from Online Abuse • The Words That Matter • Counter-speech as Content Moderation • Black Twitter Is Dead... But Its Spirit Will Live On • Why the Takeaways from the Cases • **Free Speech vs. Free Ride: Navigating the Supreme Court's Social Media Rulings** • Participation of Marginalized Youth in Designing a Machine Learning-Based Model to Identify Child Abuse • **Y'all: Black Twitter and the Rise of Digital Counternarratives** • Empowering Speech by Moderating the Work • The Effects of Social Approval Signals on the Production of Online Hate • Digital natives, digital adults, and government surveillance and censorship • **The Social Biome: How Everyday Communication Connects Us** • Set and Renew: Section 230 Should Protect Human Speech, Not Algorithmic Virality • Ten Myths About ChatGPT • Public Perceptions of ChatGPT: Exploring How Nonexperts Evaluate Its Risks and Benefits • The First AI Thinks It Knows About You

# The Reading List

4

By Matt Kristoffersen  
& Shelby El Otmani

**pressed: Inequity and the Digital Mundane in Favelas of Brazil** • It Takes at Least 200 Hours to Make Sovereignty: From the Digital Silk Road to the Return of the State • Why Marginalized Areas Bear the Brunt of Online Violence is Violence • Centering Community Voices: How Tech Companies Can Better Engage with Their Users? Detecting Misinformation With AI Models in Real-Time • **Accountability Infrastructure: How to Implement It** • How Harder It's Harder • How Social Media Amplifies Misinformation More Than Information • Social Media Is a Digital Junkyard • The Mundane in Favelas: Causes and Consequences • **TikTok Bill Q&A: Experts Forecast Legal and Creative Solutions** • How to Detect, Expose, and Engage with False Information • Anthem of Misogyny • How TikTok Went From Addictive to Harmful • How the Private Sector Can Co-Create Healthy Digital Public Space? • **White Paper: The Case for a Digital Public Space** • There Is No Such Thing as a Magic Number • Why Online Free Speech Is Now Up to the Supreme Court • Hollywood Writers and Actors Strike, the Creator Economy Is the Next Frontier for Organized Labor • **How to Close the Knowledge Gap Within and Between Countries: Implications for Combatting Misinformation** • The Junkification of the Internet • How Gig Work Pits Customers Against Workers • Breaking the Silence: How to Assess Platform Impact on Mental Health and Civic Norms • **Underexplored Ways to Regulate AI** • How to Stop ChatGPT in Its Tracks • How Tech Regulation Can Leverage Product Experimentation • Why regulating AI is so hard – and Necessary • Social Processes of Online Hate • Gonzalez & Taamneh: **How AI Shapes the Media Paradox** • Better Feeds: Algorithms That Put People First • Will AI Degrade Online Communities? • How AI Abuse and Neglect • Let Me Tell You, ChatGPT-like AI Will Not Change Our World • **We Tried to Tell You About It** • We Need to Control AI Agents Now • Want to fight misinformation? Teach people how algorithms work • How Activists in Non-digital Environments Use Technology to Circumvent Digital Censorship • **How Technology Connects and Shapes Us** • The Critical Role of Research in the Fight for Algorithmic Accountability • Sunstein: How to Talk About the Effect of Social Media Use on Well-Being • Misinformation Exploits Outrage to Spread Online • The First Amendment Meets the Virtual Public Square • The Future of Research on Social Technologies • **What's Next for Research on Social Technologies**

---

A significant part of RSM's mission has been to create public-facing work that reaches the general public as well as academic and industry audiences. From op-eds in *The New York Times* and appearances in Hulu documentaries, to publishing books and producing podcasts, RSM's community of faculty, visiting scholars, fellows, and staff have lent their voices to outlets across academia and mainstream media. Here are just a handful of the publications produced by our community members over the years, showcasing the wide range of topics they have explored. →

---

## Technology of the Oppressed: Inequity and the Digital Mundane in Favelas of Brazil

(MIT Press, February 2022)

Inaugural Visiting Scholar **David Nemer** investigates how residents of Brazil's favelas appropriate and even resist digital platforms and technologies to serve their needs, even in the face of oppression through those very same technologies.

## Uncommon Naledge

(Garnet Media Group, February 2023)

Visiting Scholar **Jabari Evans** hosts this ongoing podcast about Black culture related to journalism, art, and media studies. Jabari recorded his episode with Dr. James Riley, Assistant Professor at Harvard Business School, at RSM in February 2023.

## Accountability Infrastructure: How To Implement Limits on Platform Optimization to Protect Population Health

(platformaccountability.com, June 2023)

RSM Assembly Fellow **Nathaniel Lubin** co-authors this article proposing a novel mechanism design framework as a way to hold social media platforms accountable for the content they host, in order to alleviate a range of societal harms—including negative impacts on mental health.

## TikTok Bill Q&A: Experts Forecast Legal and Creative Impact

(RSM, April 2024)

Sourcing insight from experts including Visiting Scholars **Anupam Chander**, **David Craig**, and **Jabari Evans**, the RSM team produced a Q&A in response to the Biden Administration's Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act to understand the potential ramifications of the order across sectors.

## White Paper: Interventions for Online Harassment of Journalists

(RSM, July 2024)

Research Assistant **Molly Cinnamon** outlines recommended interventions at every step of online harassment campaigns against journalists, galvanizing both organizational and technological resources.

## The Algorithmic Knowledge Gap Within and Between Countries: Implications for Combatting Misinformation

(HKS Misinformation Review, August 2024)

Visiting Scholar **Myojung Chung** shares her research on knowledge gaps across sociodemographic groups about how algorithms work, and how algorithmic knowledge can help people combat misinformation online.

## Underexplored Ways to Regulate Social Media

(Tech Policy Press, August 2024)

Written by a team including Employee Fellow **Manon Revel**, RSM Assembly Fellow **Nathaniel Lubin**, and ASML Staffer **Kalie Mayberry**, this article outlines two potential frameworks for improving regulation: social media as architecture, and social media as market.

## Free Speech vs. Free Ride: Navigating the Supreme Court's Social Media Paradox

(Communications of the ACM, October 2024)

Visiting Scholar **Marshall Van Alstyne** argues that the government must hold social media companies accountable to either a common carrier analogy or a publisher analogy in order to properly regulate online platforms.

## We Tried to Tell Y'All: Black Twitter and the Rise of Digital Counternarratives

(Oxford University Press, January 2025)

Visiting Scholar **Meredith Clark** explores Black Twitter's production of counternarratives that challenge the dominant media frames about what it means to be Black in America in the age of social media, a concept she refers to as Black Digital Resistance.

## The Social Biome: How Everyday Communication Connects and Shapes Us

(Yale University Press, February 2025)

Visiting Scholar **Jeff Hall** and his co-author examine the social and technological forces integral to creating and maintaining relationships, and why, despite an abundance of tools aimed at building connection, many people are feeling more disconnected than ever.

## What AI Thinks It Knows About You

(The Atlantic, May 2025)

Faculty Co-Director **Jonathan Zittrain** explores what we can learn about how LLMs make assumptions based on how we interact with chatbots, and why it's important that users understand how their conversations with models are being used.



5

# From Prototypes to Panels

## Events That Made an Impact

By *Shelby El Otmani*

For scholars, innovators, and lifelong learners alike, Harvard stands as a beacon for rigorous research and intellectual freedom across nearly every discipline. RSM has leveraged the University's appeal and unmatched convening power to host upwards of forty events with the goal of sharing our work with the public. From a weekly student lunch series to interactive, closed-door workshops, RSM has made social media research open and accessible to a broad audience.



*RSM Director Rebecca Rinkevich and participants of "Now and Next: Platform Accountability and Content Governance", a two-day convening co-hosted with the Oversight Board.*



*The Future of the Internet Summit launching the Applied Social Media Lab in October 2023.*



BKC Co-Founder & RSM Faculty Co-Director Prof. Jonathan Zittrain leads RSM's first public event, "Private Social Media Data in the Public Interest: What's Next?", with Prof. Nathaniel Persily, Nabiha Syed, Nicole Wong, and Prof. Ethan Zuckerman.

## EMBRACING OUR VIRTUAL WORLD

Born out of the pandemic, RSM fully embraced the advantages and opportunities of offering both fully remote and hybrid events. This hybrid format has allowed us to host speakers and guests that would otherwise be unable to join us in person due to distance or other circumstances, and has allowed our community to get creative with facilitation for their unique events.

- **Private Social Media Data in the Public Interest: What's Next? (Fall 2021)** - Marking RSM's first public event, this virtual panel posed the question: what would genuine data-driven oversight of social media companies look like? Moderated by Faculty Co-Director **Jonathan Zittrain** and featuring panelists including former Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer Nicole Wong and University of Massachusetts' Ethan Zuckerman, the discussion aimed to set an agenda for the Institute.
- **The Technology Future We Want: Imagining Positive Futures For Social Media (Spring 2022)** - Facilitated by Senior Advisor **S. Newman** and Faculty Co-Director **James Mickens**, this fully virtual workshop allowed participants to consider the opportunities and risks of social media, and brainstorm what a more ideal online landscape could look like.
- **Gonzalez v. Google Live Analysis (Spring 2023)** - Hosted by Visiting Scholar **Kate Klonick** and **Jonathan Zittrain**, this live blogging event brought together legal experts, including Mary Anne Franks and Alan Rozenshtein, to react in real time to the Supreme Court's oral arguments in *Gonzalez v. Google*, which addressed whether recommended content ought to be protected under Section 230.

## ENGAGING AND INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS

RSM's workshops were designed to convene groups of people with particular experiences or expertise—such as policy makers, industry leaders, and researchers—in order to crowdsource new questions and insights on specific projects that often led to tangible outputs and revisions to ongoing projects.

- **Social Media as a Crisis Discipline (Fall 2021)** - Inspired by his paper, “Stewardship of Global Collective Behavior,” RSM Assembly Fellow **Joe Bak-Coleman** and **James Mickens** facilitated this workshop with a group of interdisciplinary professionals and academics to imagine what stewardship of social media looks like.
- **Imagining Alternative Social Media Designs (Spring 2023)** - Inspired by his work around Minus, a finite social media platform, RSM Assembly Fellow **Ben Grosser** gave participants the opportunity to think critically about social media infrastructure, and reimagine how we might create digital ecosystems removed from profit incentives and algorithmic control.
- **Building Accountability Infrastructures for Social Media and LLMs (Spring 2024)** - Assembly Fellow **Nathaniel Lubin** shared a novel framework for thinking about and governing social media and AI, and invited participants to develop their own nuanced approaches and questions within the proposed policy design.



2023-2024 Employee Fellow Manon Revel leads a conversation on "Democracy and Technology" with DemocracyNext's Claudia Chwalisz and Harvard Law School's Prof. Lawrence Lessig (not photographed).



2023-2024 Visiting Scholars Lisa Austin, Jeff Hall and Swati Srivastava with researcher Gabriel Nicholas at the "Platforms and the Right to Information" workshop, co-hosted with the University of Toronto's Schwartz Reisman Institute.



2024-2025 Visiting Scholar AJ Escoffery at a closed-door workshop.



2023-2024 RSM Employee Fellow Nadah Feteih in conversation with Anika Collier Navaroli for the RSM Speaker Series.

The Future of the Internet Summit launching the Applied Social Media Lab in October 2023.

## WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

RSM has made a point of developing new connections to other organizations both at Harvard and beyond. The connections made have helped strengthen the greater network of social media researchers across geographical and ideological borders.

- **Governance in Online Speech Leadership Series (Spring 2023)** - This two-day, invitation-only conference hosted by **Kate Klonick** and co-hosted with Yale's Information Society Project, Stanford's Cyber Policy Center, the Integrity Institute, Trust & Safety Foundation, and Trust & Safety Professional Association discussed the history and future of online safety, content moderation, and regulatory reform.
- **Now & Next: Platform Accountability and Content Governance (Fall 2023)** - RSM facilitated this two-day event—including a closed-door event—convening members of Meta's Oversight Board and leading academics to explore challenges and triumphs of content moderation at scale. Speakers included BKC Affiliate and Oversight Board Member Julie Owono, as well as BKC Faculty Associate Evelyn Douek.
- **Platforms and the Right to Information (Spring 2024)** - Led by Visiting Scholar **Lisa Austin** and Employee Fellow **Nadah Feteih** and in collaboration with the University of Toronto's Schwartz Reisman Institute for Technology and Society, this day-long event brought together scholars to discuss issues around social media governance, including access to personal data.

---

## THE RSM SPEAKER SERIES

The Speaker Series was designed to bring cutting-edge research and new ideas to BKC and the greater Harvard community. Speakers included some of our visiting scholars as well as notable names in industry and academia, including Natalie Stroud, Joshua Tucker, and Dave Willner.

---

## A LAUNCHPAD FOR THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNET

In October 2023, RSM kicked off the launch of the Applied Social Media Lab (ASML) with a massive event featuring innovators, researchers, and thought leaders across the social media field. Speakers included Professors Lawrence Lessig, Martha Minow, and Latanya Sweeney, as well as DJ Patil and Yoel Roth to discuss the state of social media and prospects for the future.

---

# What's On Your Mind?

Scholars and Fellows on the Issues and Projects That Made RSM

By Shelby El Otmani

Even if you're not "chronically online", your social, political, and even professional experiences have most likely been impacted by the integration of social media into everyday life. From the influence of the Internet on elections, popular culture, or our well-being, to questions around how we create, moderate, and protect ourselves online, it's evident that this digital landscape has become far more than just a place to check in on old friends; it's become a place that can be just as vibrant and consequential as anything IRL.

This shift to a nearly full integration of our digital and physical lives occurred well before RSM was ever even a concept. And the questions around the opportunities and pitfalls of this brand-new world have continued to pile up. How are people using their platforms to create and express themselves? How are these companies—and our governments—reacting to the content produced online? And how can we regain control of our safety and identity once they have been compromised?

We asked some of our visiting scholars and fellows to share their research, offer their reflections, and articulate their original thoughts on some of the questions and ideas that have underlined much of the work supported by the Institute over the last few years.

*The responses in the following sections have been edited for length and clarity.*



## Shining a Light on the Dark Side of Creative Expression

By Joe Walther, 2023-2024  
Visiting Scholar

Creativity and expression are ideas we usually associate with good things and attractive outcomes. Artistic and aesthetic creations in social media are social—for audiences, or collaborators, to encourage admiration, extension, maybe a little competition, and abundant congratulation. Ironically, those very social actions that follow the expressions many of us appreciate also describe social interactions among those who produce the hate messages that many of us deplore.

I call this approach a prosocial explanation of anti-social behavior. Much online hate is primarily motivated and gratified by social approval among those who share or admire the racist, anti-immigrant, and misogynist messages, religious bigotry, attacks on sexual identity, and otherwise demonizing and dehumanizing social media messages and memes.

So the work that I've been doing at RSM examines the problem from the inside out, focusing on the haters and the patterns of reinforcement they garner that encourage the propagation of hate

online. The “applause” haters get from likes and concurring replies, we find, lead them to post more frequently and more hatefully. We're exploring how different platforms, with different user bases and local cultures (and affordances such as “dislikes”), change that basic pattern. Through RSM we're tackling online hate as a horribly problematic form of expression, through legal, technical, psychological, and social processes, to try to mitigate the normalization of desensitization, demonization, and polarization that the creation and expression of intolerance promotes online.



## The Growing Influence of Influencers

By David Craig, 2023-2024  
Visiting Scholar

For two decades, we have witnessed the accelerated rise of global creator cultures as millions of social media users now harness platforms to generate social, cultural, political, and economic value. These social media entrepreneurs may be described as creators and influencers, YouTubers and TikTokers, vloggers and streamers, gamers and muk-bangers, or, in China, KOLs (key opinion leaders), wanghong, and

zhubo. Creator cultures built a global economy speculated to be worth trillions while capable of disrupting every aspect of contemporary society, from fostering populist movements to crippling legacy media, nurturing religious activity and advancing social movements, promoting mis and disinformation and encouraging hope, progress, and change.

Where does this phenomena intersect with questions of expression and creation? Arguably, creators operate at the leading edge of creativity and communication across these platforms because their livelihoods depend upon it. Of vital distinction, however, is that creator content practices share far less in common with premium media content, namely scripted films and series. Rather, their creative practices involve generating social content that is discursive, demotic, and vernacular in form and modality like vlogging and streaming. In contrast to claims around art and storytelling, creators “use” content as a function for promoting affinity and engagement at scale. Rather than future Oscar and Emmy winners, or even advertisers and promoters, creators are to content as clergy are to speeches. Rather than Sermons on the Mount, creators offer proverbial sermons for clout, to engage and aggregate followers that may be converted into currency and votes.



# “They remix, they reimagine, they refuse erasure.”



## The Complexities of Online Expression

By Jabari Evans, 2022-2023 Visiting Scholar

Social media acts as a democratizing force, permitting Black voices to converge and engage in political discourse and personal storytelling. This accessible mode of expression can also enhance self-awareness and foster authentic self-representation, as young people learn how to communicate to the world around them by curating their online personas.

However, the environment is complex, as the mechanics of ex-

pression can provoke parallels to real-life anxieties, such as the fear of isolation, hyper-surveillance and harassment, which can lead to self-censorship. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram invite self-expression, but they also demand it under conditions driven by clout—the currency of attention.

In my research, I explore how young people navigate these dynamics: how they manage visi-

bility, curate their identities, and resist the pressures to conform to algorithmic expectations.

Whether through a battle rap posted online, a protest organized on social media, or a classroom cipher that builds collective resilience, they show us that creation is never just about self-promotion—it's about survival, solidarity, and hope.



## A Rollback in Moderation

By *Swati Srivastava, 2023-2024 Visiting Scholar*

Social media governance is in flux. We started 2025 with Meta announcing changes to moderation policies to align with expectations of the incoming administration. This included eliminating third-party fact checking in the U.S. and assigning fewer AI and human resources to detect actionable content, instead offloading the work of flagging content to users. YouTube had also quietly changed its moderation in late 2024 to allow at least half of “public interest” videos to contain potentially prohibited content before removal, doubling the previous allowable threshold. We may see the moderation rollback as the new normal.



## Fear of Foreign Apps

By *Anupam Chander, 2023-2024 Visiting Scholar*

Rather than being a champion of free speech across borders, the United States in the last few years has signaled that it now sees

cross-border information flows as a national security threat. And as the ongoing TikTok divest-or-ban case shows, the fear of foreign speech goes beyond any one Administration.

The Biden Administration helped draft the law that would ban TikTok, and it defended the law vociferously in court as necessary to prevent “covert content manipulation” from abroad. And the executive branch has claimed increasing power to block foreign information services over the last few years, so much so that the President claims the power to block a foreign app on national security grounds. As I show in my paper, “The National Security Internet”, the Biden Administration continued the first Trump Administration’s increasing national security turn over Internet regulation. Among other things, the Biden Administration adopted the Supply Chain Rule, which empowers the commerce secretary to block information and communications services which might give a foreign adversary access to Americans’ data. Given that online news services typically collect data as part of their business model, this rule gives the executive enormous power over foreign information services.

I do not mean to deny concerns about the manipulation of Americans through social media. Rules

prohibiting foreign expenditures in American elections and transparency in funding seem reasonable mechanisms to protect the integrity of American elections without interfering with foreign speech. However, we need to rein in national security powers that have been extended to the executive or claimed by it.



## Secure & Respectful Technologies

By *Elissa Redmiles, 2022-2023 Visiting Scholar*

Computer security research focuses on protection: protecting security, privacy, safety, and free speech. What we choose to protect, and how we achieve that protection, dictates whether technology will support—or hinder—our well-being. A technology that protects our safety—robustly defending against malicious use for sexual abuse, for example—while endangering our right to free speech or privacy falls short.

To realize the potential of technology for supporting wellbeing, we need to build what I have termed “Respectful Technologies”: systems that respect a user’s expectations for

privacy, security, and safety and their expectations for how the system will influence their life (as described in my article, "The Need for Respectful Technologies: Going Beyond Privacy").

As an example, in Safe(r) Digital Intimacy's work on the use of AI for image-based sexual abuse of adults, we implement the idea of Respectful Technology by simultaneously quantifying the ecosystem of AI models and techniques used to generate abusive imagery, as well as perpetrator and bystander motivations and norms, and how the ecosystem of AI models, techniques, and communities that support free (sexual) expression use AI to create non-abusive intimate imagery for pleasure, art, and self-discovery.



## Well-Being, Trust, and Intimate Privacy Protection

By Jon Penney, 2022-2023 Visiting Scholar

Trust is central to our well-being because it is foundational to how we connect with and interact with others. We develop close relationships through a process of mutual self-disclosure and vulnerability that is based on

trust. How can trust, and the well-being it ensures, be protected and promoted online and offline?

We hypothesized that protections for intimate privacy—the power to manage and control who has access to information about one's body, health, thoughts, sexual activity, and close personal relationships—could do so, as mutual self-disclosure is only possible if we can trust our partners, friends, and anyone else (social media platforms included) to keep our intimate information safe.

What we found is that intimate privacy protections can not only promote trust in the short term, but also help foster greater sharing and expression over the long term, especially for women and visible minorities—groups disproportionately victimized by online abusers.

We also found that such protections had these impacts whether implemented through legislation or via social media platform-based measures, like content moderation. In other words, though privacy protections and content moderation are often criticized as restrictive of expression and sharing, we found that intimate privacy protections and content moderation actually supports expression, sharing, and ultimately, our relationships by promoting deeper trust. Intimate

privacy protection is thus critical to our well-being today and in the future.



## Online Safety for Journalists and Beyond

By Elodie Vialle, 2022-2023 RSM Assembly Fellow

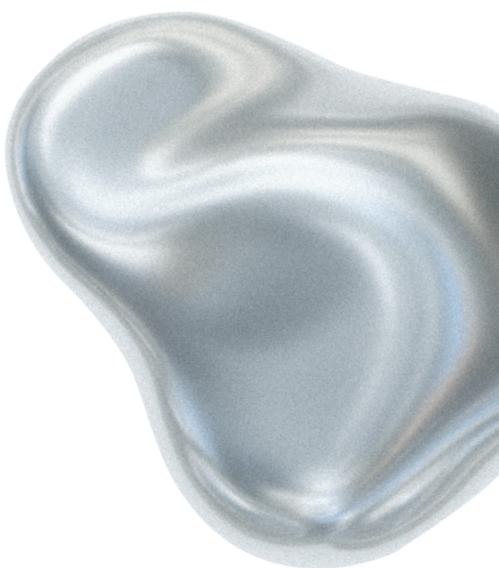
Prioritizing proactivity over reactivity in our approach to online safety is the next significant innovation for social media. As a journalist and press freedom defender supporting women journalists targeted by online harassment, I have documented for over a decade the real human cost of deprioritizing well-being on social media. Impersonation, doxxing, intimidation, threats, non-consensual pornography:

73% of women journalists in the world are targeted by online harassment—a tactic aimed at discrediting and silencing them. One-third of women journalists envision leaving the profession because of these attacks.

At RSM, I focused on developing escalation channels with social media platforms for journalists and human rights defenders facing online abuse. Since then, this work has informed the practices

of dozens of organizations and been featured as a good practice for DSA enforcement in the EU, particularly around risk assessments and trusted flaggers mechanisms.

Innovation comes with collaboration, and RSM was the perfect space to create this technical and social innovation.



**“Innovation doesn’t happen in silos. It needs spaces to share ideas freely, to build together, to express our many perspectives.”**

# The Anatomy of a Social Media Project

RSM has served as an incubator and testing ground—a circulatory system of sorts—for scholars and fellows working to reimagine the digital ecosystem. Through tools, networks, pedagogies, and protocols, their projects aim to build platforms and practices that better support the humans who use and moderate them, and take on the foundational questions of our digital anatomy: Who holds power? What values are encoded? How do these systems shape our collective well-being? And ultimately: how might we build infrastructure with greater intention, equity, and care?

Each body of work reveals limbs of the future we're trying to build—from radical new social platforms to tools for algorithmic transparency, frameworks for intergenerational tech to blueprints for platform accountability. Together, they demonstrate that the future of social media doesn't lie in just bandaging what's broken, it lies in imagining what's possible.

In this spread, we dissect a selection of past and present RSM-supported projects using a simple anatomy:

## → The Heart

*What is the audacious question?*

## → The Arms

*What lifts it up?  
What principles guide it?*

## → The Bones

*What traditions, theory, or community knowledge form its foundation?*

## → The Legs

*What is it moving toward?  
How might it shape what's next?*

## Community Notes Monitor

*Paul Resnick,  
2024-2025 Visiting Scholar*

### HEART

We present data from X's Community Notes to help the general public understand how it works, and how well it's working. You can see all the notes for any given day and search on keywords. You can also understand why any note was approved or not by seeing how their algorithm checked for up-votes from people who hadn't always agreed in the past.

### ARMS

It turns out that raw transparency is only a first step to public accountability for social media platforms. X's Community Notes program provides unusual transparency, with the code publicly available and almost daily dumps of anonymized notes and user votes. However, making those dumps useful to people who are not computer scientists requires a lot of additional work. RSM provided encouragement that helping the public to understand social media algorithms was valuable, and recruited Zach Deocadiz, a Harvard Graduate School of Design student, who designed the visual elements of the site.

## BONES

The project also benefited from the infrastructure of my home institution, the University of Michigan and its Center for Social Media Responsibility. The site depends on significant computing resources (we download and process many terabytes of data from X every day).

## LEGS

For the foreseeable future, we will continue to download daily data dumps from X and update the site. I hope that researchers who want to track the effectiveness of Community Notes will find our site easier to use than processing the giant data dump themselves. And I hope that high school and university courses on algorithmic literacy will make use of our tutorial page that illustrates how the depolarizing vote counting algorithm selects notes that appeal to users who haven't agreed in the past.

## Term Tabs

*Marissa Gerchick,  
2022-2023 RSM Assembly Fellow*

## HEART

As an RSM Assembly Fellow, I built Term Tabs, a tool for querying definitions in tech-related legislation introduced in the United States Congress and in enacted U.S. fed-

eral laws. The tool is designed to make it easier to search and compare definitions, to present information in a manner that is interpretable to various audiences, and to serve as a resource that can be further built upon by others.

## ARMS

At a time when many policymakers, advocates, tech companies, and the public are swept up in broad debates about whether and how to regulate emerging technologies, definitions of key terms like “artificial intelligence” in legislation are representations of some of the biggest questions in technology policy today. In collaboration with the BKC community, I came to realize that a tool that did something seemingly simple—aggregating tech-related definitions across legislative proposals—could enable debate, discussions, and potentially progress on something much harder: articulating clear, workable, and robust definitions.

## BONES

Term Tabs relies on open, accessible, machine-readable legislative data, including from the Congress API. My project was also largely shaped by my experience working in Congress for the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Antitrust Subcommittee through the Tech-Congress program, where I expe-

rienced firsthand the challenges of crafting and analyzing definitions for legislation.

## LEGS

In the future, I’m planning to explore additional policy-relevant applications of structured legislative definitions data. As debates about how to govern emerging and existing technologies continue in the U.S. and around the world, we can look to legislative definitions to provide valuable and practical insights for policy conversations and hopefully move us toward answering those broad and challenging questions.

---

## Minus Social

*Ben Grosser,  
2022-2023 RSM Assembly Fellow*

## HEART

Minus is a finite social network where users get only 100 posts—for life. It rejects the endless growth and engagement imperatives that define today’s platforms, and instead proposes a slower, more deliberate form of online connection that values presence, reflection, and care. It exposes how much the platforms we take for granted have activated our desire for more as the unchallenged default.

## ARMS

Minus resists what has long been seen as non-negotiable in platform design: more posts, more followers, more likes. Building a social network that deliberately limits interaction—and that doesn't seek to convert user activity into profit—pushes against the economic and affective foundations of social media as we know it. In an ecosystem defined by scalability and stickiness, Minus proposes limits as a critical act.

## BONES

Minus draws on traditions of critical art, design, and technology practices that question how systems shape behavior. It's informed by research and theory on topics such as surveillance capitalism, interface critique, and quantification as a technology of distance—threads I've explored in earlier works like Facebook Demetricator and Go Rando. It also owes a debt to communities that have long modeled slower, more intentional forms of online presence, from early Internet forums to contemporary experiments in degrowth and slow computing.

## LEGS

While others claim the age of social media is ending, I argue it has barely begun—what we've seen so far is a narrow set of models optimized for exponential growth. Minus calls for radical experimentation with social platforms themselves, breaking from the Facebook/Twitter/Instagram mold that has dominated for two decades. The future isn't about giving up on connection; it's about imagining ways of connecting that center the human and the social over the company and its profit.



2022-2023 RSM Assembly Fellows Marissa Gerchick and Samuel Brasil at a workshop.

# Pandora's Way

Javier Agüera,  
2022-2023 RSM Assembly Fellow

## HEART

Pandora's Way helps families thoughtfully introduce kids to digital adolescence through modernized rites of passage, empowering young people to develop awareness, self-efficacy, and responsible technology use. It transforms a mental health conundrum affecting both parents and kids into a pivotal experience of personal growth and community alignment.



RSM Assembly Fellow Javier Agüera representing RSM Assembly Fellow Ben Grosser's web browser extension, "Facebook Demetricator".

## ARMS

Pandora's Way boldly challenges conventional parental control paradigms, shifting the narrative from restriction to agency. The RSM Fellowship helped us ground our approach in rigorous research and expand our ability to provoke essential dialogues about tech, parenting, and the role of youth. Most importantly, we found a home in an incredible community of fellow practitioners, some of which even became investors and board advisors in our venture!

## BONES

Our project draws inspiration from human practices that pre-date written language and that has been honed over centuries and cultures, from the Bar Mitzvah to the Vision Quest. We integrated these anthropological insights with the latest in behavioral science, pedagogy, and deep tech. RSM's support led to new partnerships like Sesame Workshop, who have kept infusing the project with deep, multidisciplinary expertise in areas like children well-being and UX.

## LEGS

We are currently fundraising for a pre-seed round to support the imminent launch of our first product, co-designed with over 300 families. Ultimately, we aim to become a lifelong companion for navigating major life transitions for people of all ages. We believe this will become an increasingly vital role as rapid technological change heightens the need for resilient, supportive communities—and the practices that will support them.

⑧

## Building the Field:

# Students at the Forefront of Social Media Research

*By Shelby El Otmani*



Building a better Internet demands bold ideas, long-term commitment, and an investment in the next generation of changemakers, which is why RSM has empowered students to lead the charge. RSM's student programs have hosted over a dozen of the brightest minds across the country. They came to the Institute to build a better understanding of social media research while paving their own unique path to contributing to a better digital world. We spoke with a few of our past student leaders to hear how their time at RSM helped shape their careers and deepen their interests in the field.

*Responses have been edited for length and clarity.*

## ZHAMILYA BILYALOVA

Former RSM Summer Intern



### → BEFORE RSM

I was in my sophomore year studying Data Science and Anthropology at Wellesley College while co-running PrivaZy, a youth privacy project blending storytelling, research, and critical tech education. I was very interested in building something that felt personal, inspired by my love for chaplaincy and building meaningful connections.

### → DURING RSM

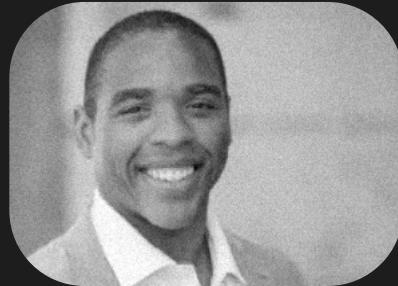
I explored children's digital rights, online privacy, and safety by conducting interviews and exchanging ideas with researchers, policymakers, and youth advocates to surface key policy gaps. I analyzed how techno-legal "solutions" (coined by danah boyd and María P. Angel) often missed the human complexity of young peoples' online lives.

### → AFTER RSM

I joined the Youth, Media, and Well-Being Research and Action Lab at Wellesley to further study youth experiences on social media and co-design solutions for digital well-being. I am now part of the Human-Computer Interaction Lab at Wellesley, and looking into automation and the future of work. I'm sharpening my research skills and continuing to work on projects that sit at the intersection of tech, care, and human experience.

## DYLAN MOSES

Former RSM Research Assistant



### → BEFORE RSM

I worked in cybersecurity consulting and online trust and safety. I enjoyed the policy and governance aspect of trust and safety so much that I decided on law school as a way to lend my voice to the conversation.

### → DURING RSM

I helped out with RSM's coverage of *Gonzalez v. Google* and *Taamneh v. Twitter* and worked closely with rockstars, like Bruce Schneier and Kate Klonick. I also collaborated with a journalist to pitch frameworks for sensitive content escalation channels to social media companies.

### → AFTER RSM

I'm working as a judicial law clerk and getting involved in some pretty interesting Section 1983 cases, which is very different from what I'm used to in the social media/First Amendment world. But in my free time, I'm still trying to find time to write about social media and free speech. I've got a few ideas cooking. Watch out!

## MOLLY CINNAMON

*Former BKC Research Assistant*



### → BEFORE RSM

Before law school, I was a privacy and cybersecurity engineer at Palantir and then Cloudflare. As a Harvard undergrad, I was always gravitating to BKC, both as a research assistant and an eager attendee of the many fascinating lunch talks.

### → DURING RSM

I wrote a white paper called “Interventions for Online Harassment of Journalists.” Online harassment of journalists is one of the biggest problems of today’s age—trolls coordinate abuse in the hopes of silencing truthful and accurate news reporting. And they’re often successful.

### → AFTER RSM

I just graduated from Harvard Law School. I am heading back to California to clerk for a district court judge for a year. After that, I will continue my career looking at the intersection of law-and-technology, ideally working on cybersecurity, privacy, or the future of the Internet (and I look forward to my future visits back to BKC!).

## BENJAMIN VILLA

*Former RSM Summer Intern*



### → BEFORE RSM

I was studying a Masters in Design Engineering at Harvard and working on a platform called OpenSpaces, which revisited geosocial networking following the legacy of bulletin board style platforms with some added constraints to reconnect us to physical experiences nearby.

### → DURING RSM

I continued refining OpenSpaces into a vision of a walkable digital city. I introduced geofencing content to limit interactions to a 15-minute walking distance, added gamification to incentivize hyperlocal community organizers to create sports and interest-based clubs, enabled collaborative mapping for situational awareness, and designed all user generated content to decay over time to mirror ephemeral interactions.

### → AFTER RSM

I teach at Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and lead Weave Community, a continuation of OpenSpaces, as one of two co-founders. We recently raised a pre-seed round, and have launched three different platform pilots with over 1,600 users in Cambridge. Our mission remains: to create digital public infrastructure to help reweave the broken local social fabric that global platforms unraveled.

# 10 Questions About Social Media in 2025



*BKC Director & RSM Faculty Co-Director Prof. James Mickens.*

9

---

## An Interview With Professor James Mickens, Faculty Co-Director of the Institute for Rebooting Social Media

In an interview, Professor James Mickens tackled questions on topics ranging from platform transparency and emerging trends in social media research to his own personal usage and habits. The following is an excerpt from the conversation—edited for clarity and length.

---

*By Jay Kemp*

---

01

## What do you see as the most pressing issue for social media platforms heading into this new academic year?

I think that one challenge that you see across the tech spectrum is this notion of a very small number of companies having a lot of concentrated power. When you have a very small number of players dominating markets, that sort of hurts the speed with which new products get made, and it makes companies less responsive to users. And then I think that there are a lot of challenges involving AI in general. For example, there's been this theory called the "Dead Internet Theory," which has been around for a while, but which basically says that most of the content is produced by bots, and most of the people you talk to are bots. This was sort of like a tinfoil hat thing for a long time, you know? Now, I think it's real. So now I think it's time to take the tinfoil hat off.

02

## How does a lack of transparency contribute to common user frustrations on social media?

One of the big problems that users currently feel on social me-

dia networks is that they don't understand how the content that's on their timeline was actually chosen. And people end up getting frustrated with this because they say things like, "Why am I not seeing posts from my family or from my friends? Why am I seeing a video from this influencer and not another? Why do I see this ad? Why is it following me around the Internet?" And I think that's one of the reasons you see people starting to migrate to non-traditional, more decentralized platforms like Bluesky, that at least, in theory, promise you more control over what you're seeing and more visibility into why you're seeing it.

With respect to mechanisms, that's tricky because over the past three or four years, these platforms have become less observable. Various companies are shutting down their APIs that would allow researchers to see what's going on, or they're "gate-keeping" them behind very high fees. Therefore, observability increasingly will come down to two things: regulation that might force companies to provide more data or comply with transparency requests, and/or crowdsourcing data—taking like-minded users who want to band together and share their data to help researchers understand what's going on.

03

## How do you think independent research into social media systems can be better supported and protected, especially in light of this increasing platform opacity?

Community building is actually going to be quite critical as we move into this next phase of technology governance because, as I mentioned earlier, there's increasing centralization of the Internet. I think the only way to counterbalance that is to create other power centers, other collections of people who have power through their collective strength.

**"RSM has provided one of these shared spaces where people who care about social media can find each other, present their work, learn from each other, and just share that sense of community."**

People across the political spectrum all think something has gone wrong with social media. There's oftentimes disagreement over what specifically has gone wrong and how to fix it, but people think that the status quo is not tenable. One of the important functions of a place like RSM is to shine a light on that. To say, "Well, technology has given us a bunch of really cool things. No one's against the cat videos, of course. But there've also been some downsides to technology." A place like RSM that's situated in academia can encourage that type of critical analysis of technology while staying open to the possibility that technology has helped society in a large number of ways. But we don't wanna be pure techno optimists. We don't wanna just say, "Oh, you know? The tech industry will figure it out." We want to actually apply a critical lens so that technology can fulfill its promise without creating a lot of collateral damage upon users, or groups, or nations, or languages that weren't traditionally considered by the tech industry.

04

**As someone who has worked across the technical and policy domains, how do you think we can better integrate**

### **sociotechnical thinking into major research efforts going forward?**

The best way to create technology for the public good is to make sure that the public good is considered at every step of the engineering process: starting from ideation, then going through design, then to implementation, then to deployment, and then to a product roll-down. I think that a lot of engineers just want to build stuff. And so, just like with security, a lot of engineers think, "I'll deploy this thing. Once I have users, then I'll make it safe, or some definition of safe." We now know that doesn't work, so I think it's critical that, in both our schools and inside companies, we need to be educating engineers to ensure they are actually thinking about the public good at every step of the workflow.

05

**What's something about social media and how we use it that you're surprised hasn't emerged yet?**

I am somewhat surprised that we haven't seen more aggressive disconnections from social media. I think that people feel stuck, and I think society hasn't quite figured out how to deal with that fraught relationship of keeping the parts

of social media they like, but then ditching the parts they don't.

06

**Can you recall a time when user feedback was effectively integrated into a design process?**

Open-source projects provide a really interesting case study here. With open-source projects, everyone can look at the code. And in many of these projects—in theory at least—anyone can contribute stuff there. Open-source to me is both a success story and points to some of the governance challenges. Ultimately, what lies at the heart of this question is governance. How do we take a technological product and allow users to have a say, not just engineers or product managers?

07

**AI is now everywhere: in search, in feeds, in moderation. What is your take on AI's role in how we shape public trust around the content that we do and don't see online?**

AI is everywhere, and there are some things that AI can do that are quite amazing. That I can speak in one language and have my voice speak in a different language in

near real time is amazing. That used to be sci-fi stuff on *Star Trek*.

But now we have these models that can generate realistic looking text and images. There are a ton of problems there. First of all, what was that model trained on? Were all of the people who gave their data for training even notified? Were they compensated? Did they have any right to the earnings from the model? Furthermore, when models produce output, how is it detectable as model generated output? This also creates a key challenge when trying to understand what authenticity means on the Internet.

We also need to be educating people to understand that AI's not always correct. Computers in general aren't always correct. And we need to train technologists to understand that, when you build these systems, you have to think about the intended user base and who you think the product is for. Who are you not thinking that your product is for? They might end up using it too. What are the unintended consequences? Things like that really have to become part of the ethos of designing these systems.

08

**Looking ahead five to ten years, how do you envision a research lab of the**

## **future could look for those looking to make online spaces safer, richer, and more representative?**

I think five to ten years from now, academic labs that want to have an impact on the real world will have to integrate more deeply with industry. By that, I don't necessarily mean they have to take industry funding. I also don't necessarily mean that they have to only hire people from industry, but I think that we are currently in a much different world right now than we were thirty or forty years ago, where the Internet wasn't pervasive. Everyone didn't have a supercomputer in their pocket. It was much easier for academics to say, "Oh, here's some neat idea," and that idea could just go into the world because there weren't as many established titans of technology. Now, you have a lot of entrenched companies in a variety of different technological sectors. And those companies have embedded a lot of deep technical knowledge into their products. So if you're a regulator, if you're a policymaker, if you're a social scientist who wants to understand and improve how technology works, you have to bring in some expertise from the tech industry to fully address today's problems.

09

## **The Applied Social Media Lab is picking up where RSM leaves off. What is the mission of ASML and how does it compare to the work of RSM?**

The Applied Social Media Lab is, in some ways, very similar to RSM. We want to bring in a set of people who care about making technology work for the public good. The key difference between RSM and ASML is that ASML mostly hires software engineers. We bring people in from industry who have experience with building large-scale, complicated pieces of software. We want to take that talent and specifically have them working on social technology for the public good.

10

## **What will be the legacy of RSM?**

I hope that the legacy for the Institute for Rebooting Social Media is that we served as a great example of the good that can come when you bring a lot of folks together and let them marinate. There's sort of this myth in both academia, and to some extent industry, about this notion of solo work being the best work. That the way that you get the best out

of people is to essentially just put them in an office somewhere, give them some peace and quiet, and then they'll churn out the next great thing. That's true sometimes, but in general,

**“...I think the best ideas come from cross-pollination. They come from people talking to each other.”**

I'll give you a concrete example: TikTok. There are so many interesting and diverse opinions about what to do with TikTok. Is it good? Is it bad? How does the algorithm work? What does the platform owe us in terms of transparency? There have been a lot of really good discussions at RSM that we've facilitated to help people understand the different facets of this problem. And so that, I hope, is something that everyone took away from RSM—it's really great to put a bunch of people in a room—virtual, in-person, or otherwise—and have them talk about these incredibly complex issues.

## Bonus Bytes

### Which social media platform do you visit the most?

Specific subreddits on Reddit.

### Which RSM Fellow or researcher are you excited to keep watching and why?

Joe Bak-Coleman. I think he's a really great interdisciplinary thinker. He brings network science, physics, sociology, and public policy to a lot of his work.

### Where do you go online when you want to feel better about the Internet?

I look at a lot of old concerts on YouTube. When I was a kid, I'd spend a lot of time tracking down bootlegs, and it was very difficult to get these rare concerts. And now you just type in the name of the band and some year, and there's just some great footage there.

### What's one completely unserious—but strangely plausible—idea you'd implement if you were in charge of the Internet for a day?

If I could run the Internet for a day, I would architect it in a way that heavily judged people for their musical interests, because I feel like there's a lot of bad music out there, and we could just solve this in a day by having down-rating systems for music that I, as Emperor King, decided was not good.

*To watch the full interview, check out the video and transcript on our website.*





# To the RSM community and beyond,



BKC Co-Founder and RSM Faculty Co-Director Prof. Jonathan Zittrain.

When Professor James Mickens and I spun up the Institute for Rebooting Social Media in 2021, the world was in a state of profound upheaval. The Covid pandemic was still reshaping daily life, with lockdowns keeping much of the country—and the world—apart from their loved ones. Classrooms and offices had given way to Zoom rooms, a new U.S. President had taken office amidst a tumultuous transition, and the nation was experiencing waves of political and cultural unrest. The pace of change showed no signs of slowing, and social media seemed to be intrinsically connected to every facet of this new reality.

We launched RSM to examine how social media has transformed, enriched, and complicated our lives. Over the past three years, we've laid a strong foundation for ongoing research that can keep pace with the shifting digital and political landscape. And while many of the questions around how we can improve social media have evolved, we've demonstrated that it's possible to build a vibrant network of thinkers and practitioners capable of producing meaningful work in a short time to address this ever-changing landscape.

Everything we've accomplished—and everything we seek to accomplish—has been thanks to the dedication, passion, and generosity of our community. Our scholars, fellows, staff, students, and supporters are at the heart of this work, and it's their commitment that continues to inspire and propel us forward.

On behalf of the entire Institute for Rebooting Social Media community and the broader Berkman Klein Center, I thank you for your unwavering interest and commitment over the past few years. Your support lives on not only in the work we've done together, but in the new initiatives and evolving workstreams now taking shape. The impact of your belief in our mission continues to ripple outward, shaping the future of research and innovation in this field at this vital time.

## Thank you!

**Professor Jonathan Zittrain**

*Co-Founder of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society and Faculty Co-Director of the Institute for Rebooting Social Media*



INSTITUTE  
FOR REBOOTING SOCIAL MEDIA

Berkman Klein Center for Internet  
& Society at Harvard University