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### **Why Academia.edu and Not Quora? Automation Failure in Machine Learning (A.I.) and the Truth Value of Community Education**

“Quora advertises with the slogan ‘The best answer to any question’, ‘Quora aggregates questions and answers to topics. Users can collaborate by editing questions and suggesting edits to other users’ answers” (Anon 2015, ‘quora’).” (Wawra, D. 2015: 225).

“I am subscribed to something called Quora Digest. I have no idea how that happened, but each week this website accepts questions that anyone is free to answer. Lots of the questions are silly, but some are pretty interesting.” (Robertson, B. 2017: 66).

“Creating a social networking presence that will be in any way effective requires careful analysis of your business goals, strategic planning that is incorporated into your overall marketing efforts, diligence, time by you or someone else, and in most cases, money.

Below are several key points to bear in mind when venturing into the vast world of social media and social networking platforms such as blogging, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and, most recently, Quora.” (Schuele, S. 2011:25).

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“Try reading and answering academic blog posts. This can be great practice in responding to ideas in a creative but informed way. Do it properly too – don’t just offer opinion: apply some critical thinking to your responses. Some digital scholars actively use blog answering as their principal ‘online voice’. Or join Quora and try answering a few questions ([www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com)). Again, do this properly –make it a piece of research and academic text. (Jones, D. 2014).”

“Food Logging and Blogging was created in an educational setting; however, there are many arenas within the health profession that can easily adapt these blogging concepts. It is a valid forum for communicating and has the potential to expand any program that is considering to increase awareness within the health community. The Internet website, Quora, puts the number of blogs that exist on the Internet at roughly 152,000,000. However, it is difficult finding an exact number because of the blogs still online but abandoned by their creators.” (Percoco, V. M. 2017: 80).

“Moviemakers risk millions in the hope of producing the next big hit. Could artificial intelligence and machine learning improve the odds? Disney Research, the media giant’s science lab, thinks so, and is working with colleagues at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, to

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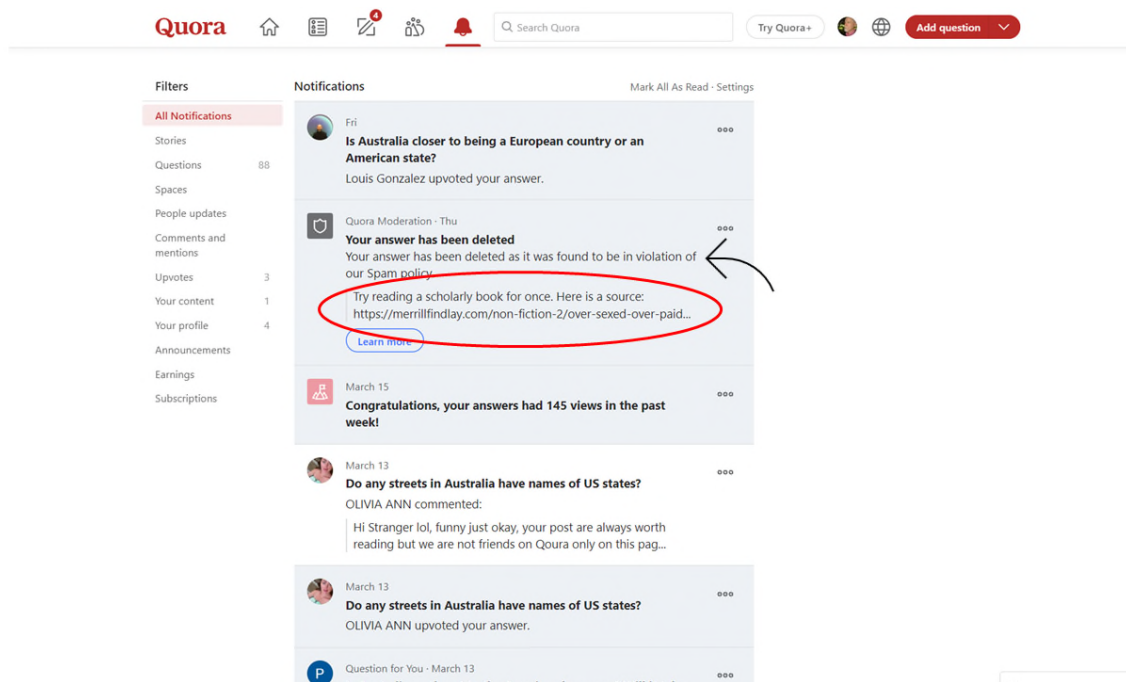
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develop an AI algorithm that can predict if readers will enjoy a short story. To create a database, the Disney team used the crowd-sourced Q&A website Quora to collect nearly 55,000 responses, classifying 28,000 as stories. They then used reader votes as “a proxy for narrative quality” and created several neural networks—which simulate human brain reactions—to determine the popularity of each story. The technology is a long way from being able to pick hot scripts, the ultimate goal.” (T.G. 2017: 12).



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This blog article explains the primary problem of the platform Quora and demonstrate that the platform Academia.edu serves the truth value of community education far better.

The article was spurred by the blocking of an answer I had placed on Quora; for the reason Quora provided as violating their 'spam policy' (see image). I had violated the policy by recommending that a scholarly book would be a far better answer than what the platform was garnishing. Admittedly, the language was strong, but ought not to have been taken as offensive – "Try reasoning a scholarly book for once." It was not SPAM, as I was not the author and have no relation to the author or the publisher, and I was recommending it as a better read than the Quora answers. I was not promoting the book for purchase. Apparently, it is not hard to block intelligent content:

"In 2017, a single typo from an Amazon engineer accidentally blocked access to a large set of servers resulting in disruption of Amazon Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3) and outages on sites such as Quora, Trello, and IFTTT." (Handler, S., Liu, L., & Herr, T. 2020: 4).

The response in this blog article is more considered and has researched an answer, not like most of the Quora answers to which Quora believes worthy to be published. Questions which are more reliably answered in Quora would be those **not** on the basis of the automotive-generated (A.I.) "research" technologies (e.g., Candeub, A. 2017: 153). The answers are highly

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technical in relation to the technology but, in most cases, there is misinformation and discrimination to the thinking on what is “research” and the educative concept of “research” in every other topic, subject, and discipline (the abuse of the technology demonstrates an inability to make these cognisant distinctions).

Anya Schiffrin (2017: 119-20) well sums up why platforms, such as Quora, cannot publish reliable research, let alone demonstrate that the concept and practice is understood:

By 2016, it was apparent that something had gone very wrong; many of the optimists of 2010 and 2011 had changed their thinking, warning of the dangers of digital technology. Wael Ghonim, whose Facebook pages are credited with galvanizing the protests in Egypt, declared that the web had become a “mobocracy.” Along with Emily Parker, Ghonim launched a site called Parlio that was meant to encourage civilized and expert discourse online about vital topics of the day. The site never garnered a large following but was bought by Quora and eventually closed down. Philip Howard began studying bot activities and disinformation during the 2016 elections in Europe and the US and came up with some startling numbers about the amount of disinformation shared over Twitter. Howard and his colleagues at the Computational Propaganda Research Project at the Oxford Internet Institute looked at seven million tweets that used hashtags related to the 2016 election between November 1 and November 11 in 16 swing states. After developing a typology based on the URLs included in these tweets, which sorted all tweets into six categories including professional political content such as government and campaign sources, professional news outlets, and polarizing and conspiracy content; Howard and his colleagues found

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overwhelming levels of news from Russian outlets, Wikileaks, and “junk news” sources flooding Twitter just before the 2016 US presidential elections. Howard and his colleagues also noted that in these 16 swing states, levels of “junk” and polarizing news exceeded those of the United States as a whole.

One only has to scratch the surface in research to find the insights to “the impacts of cyber-enabled information operations on the thinking minds and feeling hearts of target audiences” (Boyd, B., & Lin, H. 2019: 49).

And yet the public, including myself, continue to use Quora in high numbers. Quora can defend itself by referring to cases where their answers might lead to better answers (e.g., Nyffenegger, N. 2020: 222-3, 232). There are often issues with the semantics of survey questions and answers, however, if the parameter is to only record direct testimony than platforms like Quora are effective. The accuracy is read as recorded direct testimony (e.g., Bass, H. 2018: 8).

A study of the research shows several factors in why Quora fails in the truth value of community education and platforms, such as academia.edu, are much more reliable:

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**Search Engines as Tools and the IT Futurist Vision of replacing direct in-person community education:** It is a type of archetype that IT Futurists (futurism) are grossly anti-intellectualists in all other disciplines than theoretical science, technology, and mathematics; and that is difficult to pin down since the search engines avoid the term. An example is Futurism.com, a science and tech website formerly owned by [Singularity University](http://Singularity University). The company has faced allegations of sexual assault, embezzlement, and discrimination since its founding. The public marketplace has been sold this falsehood that we no longer need direct in-person community education since the I.T. and I.A. will replace the need for such community education. In denying intelligence from the other disciplines, the fool-idiot of the IT Futurist merely points the finger at everyone else as an I.T. and I.A. user, and that being the dismissive conclusion. If the stupidity, idiocy, foolishness has to be explained, there are such violations of critical thinking in several fallacies here for the counter-argument; the key one is it is the dismissal by not addressing the specific problems stated.

What needs to be explained is the I.T. broad system where the I.T. specialist is the one who speaks beyond their expert knowledge-bases and skills, and in the process, created an insular bubble:

“A Bing search from Internet Explorer produces a Wikipedia digest, Poe works, people (Virginia Clemm, Hawthorne, John Cusack), images, the Wikipedia URL, videos, eight Poe-related suggestions (*biography, history, short story, quotes, raven, poem, death theories, collected works*), and the promise of 10,900,000 results. At the page top we find Bing’s invitation to make Firefox one’s default browser with Bing its home page. The major innovation for Bing is the column on the right third of the screen called

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Social Results, beginning with five potential Facebook connections, followed by a selection of some ten recent Poe postings from social networks, such as Twitter, Klout, Quora, *Huffnpton* [sic] *Post*, and *Baltimore Sun*. The Bing top menu includes Web, Images, Videos, Maps, News, and More—the last with more than a dozen additional choices, including Entertainment, Social, Weather, Translation, Events, Math, Dictionary, Developer Tools, and Bing Apps for mobile devices and social networking. Microsoft’s position in the new browser wars is to standardize one interface throughout its entire line, Windows 8 to operate desktop and laptop computers, Internet Explorer as browser, Bing as search engine, and its new ventures into hardware, the Windows Surface tablet and Windows smartphone using versions of Windows 8.” (Heyward Ehrlich. 2013: 115-6).

The wide application of the tools without *sufficient* direct in-person community education has created misunderstanding in a bubble which becomes stupidity, idiocy, or foolishness; for the reason of its lack of openness to deeply-human communication.

The I.T. industry completely misses the problem. For example, van Manen, H., *et. al.* (2019: 25) concluded:

“...the infrastructure component of the country’s scoring exercise is conceptualized as being contingent on the existence of resources which facilitate:

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- a) the harvesting and/or generation of large reams of data, referred to as digitization;
- b) the speedy processing and/or analysis thereof, referred to as data processing potential;
- c) the development of innovative and/or utile algorithms, referred to as innovation infrastructure.

The absence of any of these three factors negatively impacts a nation’s ability to develop cutting-edge AI and to apply it towards geopolitically-relevant outcomes...Even if a large volume of data is harvested, its use within the context of training algorithms will be limited in the absence of the computing power necessary to analyze it.”

Van Manen, H., et. al. (2019) sets out well the problem within the I.T. bubble, but concludes the matter as computing power. That maybe true but the greater truth is **quality facts**, not the numbers calculated in computing power. It is that the training algorithms cannot be simply applied towards **geopolitically-relevant outcomes**, even if “unlimited”. The archetypal problem with I.T. futurists is the “mad-scientist crazy idea” that human factors can be reduced to computing power. This is the greater truth, not the technical answers inside the bubble.

There are several other factors in why Quora fails in the truth value of community education and platforms, such as academia.edu, are much more reliable. These factors come from the

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relations of the issues, stated above, and that there are only rare interdisciplinary conversations between the disciplinary bubbles:

**Automation:** The problems speak to the “intense software filtering that has allowed [specific] e-print repository” (Reyes-Galindo, L. 2016; 586).

**Disclosure:** The problems speak to the “women's and men's privacy concerns and management when communicating on the social websites” (Wawra, D. 2015: 219). This has to do with the right of privacy weighted against deliberate attempts for concealing content relating to significant public interest.

**Cognitive Design:** This goes to the statement of David D. Caron in his work, *Confronting Complexity, Valuing Elegance* -- “we should distrust complex solutions to complex problems and seek instead those that are elegant.” John Crook, however, easily demonstrates (but as complexity, not elegancy) that the stupidity of the IT futurists [my term] of seeking out “elegant software to be ‘simple, obvious, straightforward and [to require] very little intellectual effort to understand immediately.” (Crook, J. R. 2019: 72, as one example). ***The critical point is that elegance in all disciplines is not simple, but complex, in many cases far too complex for the types of algorithms that Quora use.***

One disciplinary solution offered up is the Law discipline. The abstract of Andrew Keane Woods (2018) sums up the problem(s) well and discusses the legal solution:

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“Because the internet is so thoroughly global, nearly every aspect of internet governance has an extraterritorial effect. This is evident in a number of high-profile cases that cover a wide range of subjects, including law enforcement access to digital evidence; speech disputes, such as requests to remove offensive or hateful web content; intellectual property disputes; and much more. Although substantively distinct, these issues present courts with the same jurisdictional challenge: how to ensure one state's sovereign interest in regulating the internet's local effects without infringing on other states' interests.

The answer, for better or for worse, is comity, the foreign affairs principle that informs a number of sovereign- deference doctrines. Sovereignty arguments have pervaded a number of recent consequential cases, including Google's challenge to the ‘right to be forgotten’ in Europe and Microsoft's challenge to a court order to produce foreign-held emails under the Electronic Communications Privacy Act. These arguments will continue to play a significant role in future cases. Yet the proper application of foreign affairs law to cross-border internet disputes is not what many litigants and courts have claimed. Crucially, no sovereign-deference doctrine prohibits global takedown requests, foreign production orders, or other forms of extraterritorial exercises of jurisdiction over the internet. To the contrary, one of the key lessons of the sovereign-deference jurisprudence is that in order to avoid tensions between sovereigns, courts often enable, rather than inhibit, extraterritorial exercises of authority.

This Article [Woods, A. K. 2018] has three goals. First, it seeks to identify and characterize an emerging body of case law, which we might call data-sovereignty litigation: a diverse set of cases pitting national sovereigns against large internet firms. Second, the Article aims to show how the doctrinal rules of sovereign deference ought to apply to these disputes. Finally, it makes the case for a policy of sovereign deference

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beyond courts. The stakes are considerable. If we do not find ways to accommodate legitimate sovereign claims over global cloud activity, states will forcefully assert those interests - typically by taking physical control over local network infrastructure - imposing significant costs on entrepreneurship, privacy, and speech.” (Woods, A. K. 2018: 328).

Google's challenge to the ‘right to be forgotten’ in Europe is particularly of interest to historians. The concept of the ‘right to be forgotten’ is extremely disturbing when it comes to the destruction of historical records which will have extraordinary consequences for future public histories ([Buch, 2023](#)). The line between the right of privacy and significant public interest is not as solid as folk thinks on social media. Woods also raised the issue of significant costs on entrepreneurship, privacy, and speech in taking physical control over local network infrastructure. These issues are not only beholden to the Law discipline; however, it is important discipline not to dismiss in the light of litigation in the I.T. Industry (e.g., Hermes, J. 2017). To the credit of the Economics discipline, this is one multi-disciplinary issue that the I.T. Industry has to take seriously and the economists can explain why (Greenstein, S. 2020: 192-214). The Literary and Publishing Industry are also set by problems which the I.T. Industry has very little understanding inside its bubble (e.g., Hunter, et al. 2013).

There is no shortage in the multi-disciplinary literature to speak of both the vices and virtues of both online and in-person interaction (e.g., Haugen, K., et al. 2016). This blog article has said nothing of the academia.edu as the alternative, and that is, to go to the question, “why academia.edu”, goes to the virtues of the platform as the opposites of the vices in Quora. This can be summed up as three points as the conclusion, and answering the question:

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**Answer:** The best Online Platform is –

- 1) collegial with experts listening to each other across the disciplines;
- 2) based in the epistemology of critical thinking; and most importantly, is
- 3) research-focused, according to the academia protocols.

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