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Cedars, April 2019

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// the award-winning student news publication of Cedarville University

// april 2019

_THE DIGITAL MEDIA ISSUE;

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Faculty adviser Jeff Gilbert

Table of Contents

April 2019 / Vol. 71, No. 9

Students and Technology	4-5
Data Mining	6-8
5g Networks	9
Young People Leaving Facebook	10-11
The Politics of Twitter	12
Social Media's Impact on Recruiting	13
Rise of Female Sports	14
Sports Teams' Social Media	15
Esports Emerging	16-17
Films and Their Critics	18-19

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Paolo Carrion
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Alexandria Hentschel
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Tim Miller
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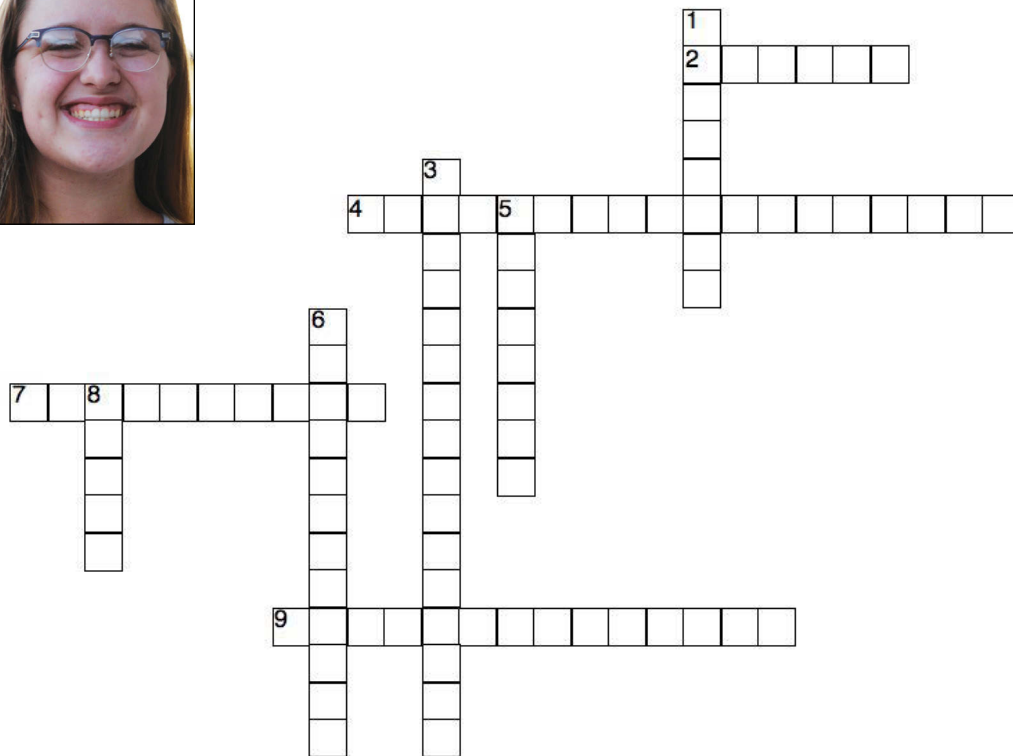
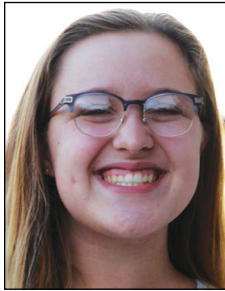
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Just Sayin' ... Alex Hentschel

A Fun Activity for You



ACROSS

- 2 The company that built AI devices, which are listening to you almost constantly ... the “echo” of their voices follows you everywhere.
- 4 The really important agreement we all click “yes” on and never read (3 words)
- 7 The man who testified in Congress after stealing your information and selling it
- 8 The country spearheading 5G networks
- 9 How companies scheme to get you to buy their products

DOWN

- 1 The most irrelevant social media platform today, after MySpace
- 3 The most important Twitter handle in America (starts with @)
- 5 When you like that pic from 8 months back, you were ...
- 6 The amount of Instagram followers I have, rounded down to the nearest 100, @alexandreeah (this will change when you read this and follow me right?)

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What is the Christian's obligation to art?

Paolo Carrion

Arts and Entertainment Editor



I like to write stories. One I wrote in high school was a depressing tale of a group of survivors in the wake of an apocalypse. In the end, everyone died. I made my friends read

it, and a few were surprised at the lack of hope. “What’s the point? Why did you write this?” one of them asked. I didn’t know how to answer. Now in college, I hope I have a clearer understanding of art.

All forms of artistic expression aim to meet four objectives in order: First, any piece of art aims to entertain. Second, that art attempts to be technically excellent. Third, the artist attempts to realistically portray some aspect of the human experience. Only after these objectives are met should art attempt to communicate some sort of message or moral.

A problem presents itself when an artist attempts to rearrange the priorities of those obligations. I recently watched a video essay that attempted to explain why so many Christian movies fail to entertain or realistically portray the human experience. In his video, “The Problem with Christian Media,” Josh Keefe says that some Christian movie makers are not really filmmakers. Really, they are preachers who use movies as their platform.

That’s not sinful; but it fails to fulfill the artist’s obligation to art. Christians have a more nuanced obligation than to simply communicate biblical truth. The world God created is not purely utilitarian, it is artistically beautiful. Created in His image, the Christian artist should also aim to create beautiful works, and not just preach through art.

Students and Technology

Cedarville professors give insight into the increased use of laptops in the classroom



Photo by Carrie Bergan

Connor Creekmur, Suzanne Grant and Lukas Benson (left to right) work on class projects. Laptops are necessary and permitted in many classrooms at Cedarville.

by Zach Krauss

In the 21st century, most students own a laptop, and just about every student writes papers on a word processor. The use of laptops and other technology in the classroom is permitted by some professors but completely prohibited by others.

What do Cedarville professors think about the use of laptops for learning?

Mary McCulley, assistant professor of English, said

laptops are important and necessary. She said she usually doesn't judge whether students are listening or not but instead just focuses on levels of engagement with the students.

"I teach a lot of composition classes, and we do a lot of writing online on their computers," McCulley said. "So I absolutely ask them to bring their laptops to class and work and save the materials they're working on."

McCulley said she's in some way on both sides of the debate. In education, laptops can be a mixed blessing. She

said the way professors implement and encourage use of technology in the classroom is important in creating an effective learning environment.

"I do think there is a way to incorporate more active learning using laptops," McCulley said. "Trying to figure out what's going to work and how that's going to fit into a discussion or lecture — I haven't quite sorted out, but I'd be open to it."

Dr. Joshua Kira, assistant professor of philosophy and theology, has a contrasting opinion. He feels that the use of

electronics in class depends largely on the nature of the class and the size of the classroom.

Kira allows computers during lectures in small classes because he said students are going to be involved and undistracted no matter what. But in the past year, he has not allowed students to have their laptops out in his larger classes. However, he hasn't noticed improvement in their grades since the change.

Kira said he has seen data that indicates laptops do not help students learn better. He noted many studies cite students aren't getting the right mode of learning to effectively comprehend information.

Kira said many professors think they should use social media and allow students to use whatever kind of electronics they want in class. Kira believes, however, that those things might actually inhibit the learning process.

"It seems like I get more questions. Maybe some of [the students] would have asked those questions if they had been paying attention but wouldn't because of distractions," Kira said. "I do think that it seems like the students are interacting more based on that."

Kira said he realizes technology is obviously necessary in many classrooms. Computers are central for learning and working in fields like IT, graphic design or computer science, so they are a necessity in the classroom. He said certain areas of the humanities and even some other science fields don't have the same requirements, and laptops would not be as profitable for learning.

"Especially something that I do which is often literary in nature, I think it can be less helpful," Kira said. "However, I think electronics and technology can be helpful in the presentation of things because it allows me to do things I wouldn't be able to do otherwise."

Dr. Aleda Chen, assistant dean for the school of pharmacy and associate professor of pharmacy, has the same sentiment. She said that, though there are disadvantages, technology in the classroom has many advantages.

Chen uses audience responses



Photo by Carrie Bergan

Shawn Ross, Hannah Dobmeier, Mya Taylor, Anna Webner and Daniel Jagod all work on their homework while hanging out together as friends.

through an interactive presentation for students in her lectures in order to evaluate how her students are doing in class without needing to administer a quiz or exam. She also incorporates live polling into her classes in order to know instantly if students understand a certain concept or idea.

"As an educator, that kind of feedback is really valuable to me," Chen said. "I also love having their laptops there with Google Drive so they can work on an activity all at the same time."

Chen said that though electronics are distracting, students will often get distracted either way.

"For me technology expands outside of the classroom and I use a lot of technology to help prepare students for classes," Chen said. "So that they can dig into material to help our class time become very active."

Zach Krauss is a senior pharmacy/music double major from central Texas and campus reporter for Cedars. He loves music, theatre, biology, community and meeting new people.

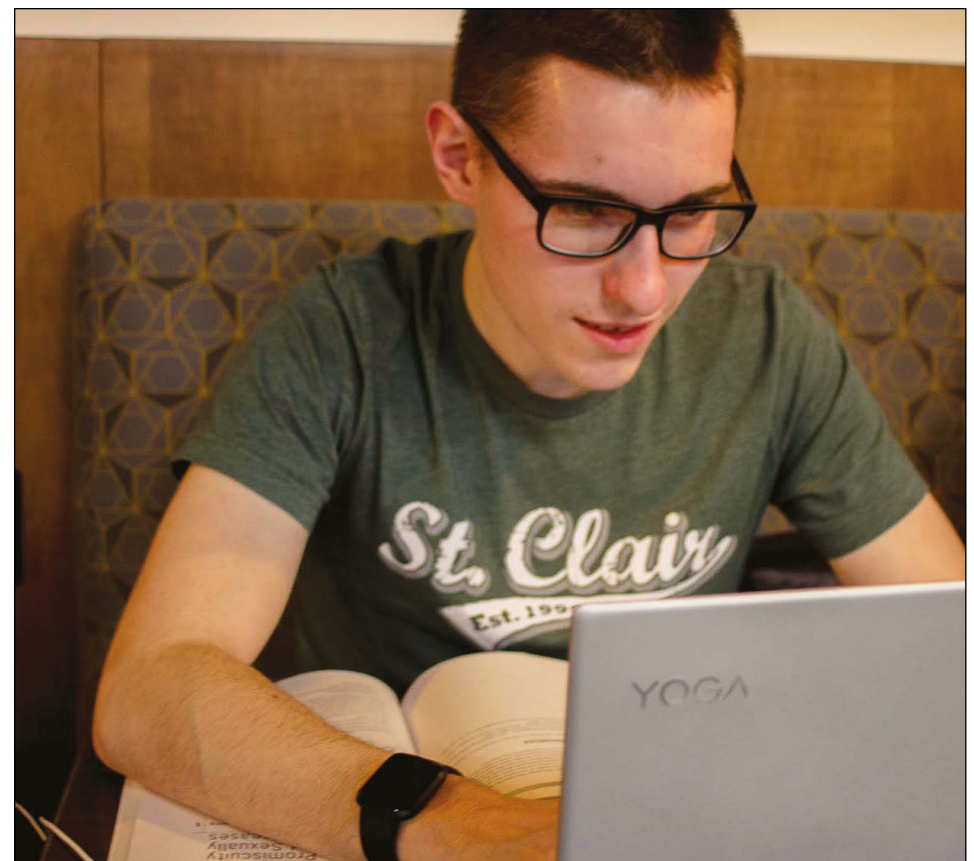


Photo by Carrie Bergan

Shawn Ross multitasks on his laptop while reading from his textbook.

Yes, Big Brother Has Your Information

The diamonds and the rough of data mining

by *Breanna Beers and
Kassie Kirsch*

There's a saying in the technology industry: if you're not paying for the product, you are the product.

Data collection is the process companies use to track and record your online footprint, and data mining is the practice of examining large databases of that collection in order to generate new information. The internet is the economic "land of the free" — or so the hundreds of thousands of companies offering digital services at no direct charge to the consumer would have the world believe. These companies offer a wide range of utilities, from organizing an inbox to summoning transportation, and in the digital age, most consumers expect these services for free.

For such companies to exist, they must find a way to monetize their services without charging users directly. Increasingly, many corporations are turning to user data as a source of income. This data can be auctioned to companies gathering information about their customer base, sold to social scientists in chunks for research, or put into an advertising algorithm to increase ad relevance and click-through rates.

As a result, nearly every service you use and website you visit collects some amount of data about who you are and why you are there. This happens with or without user knowledge, through cookies and browsing history and details you sign away in the privacy policy they know you didn't read.

The information users deliberately enter when signing up for a new account, such as name, phone number, and email address, is extremely valuable to many corporations.

The data on any person is staggering: name, birth date, sex, address, location history, workplace, school, friends, family members, hobbies, shopping habits, political leanings, media preferences, browsing records and even medical history. Facebook alone is often a focal point where much of this information gathers. Think of the impli-

cations if this information were to be combined with the data from Google, or Amazon, or Uber or the small, innocuous web pages you bounce between dozens, maybe hundreds of times daily. Today, tracking is the assumption, not the exception.

These companies aren't collecting data without a purpose. They're doing it because of real economic incentives. If you want to continue to use Gmail, Google Drive and YouTube for free, you have to accept that Alphabet (Google's parent company) has to pay the bills. Clearly, looking at the success of these companies, this model works.

So where does that data go? Most of the time it feeds advertising algorithms to serve up user-specific product recommendations that are more likely to result in a purchase. As users are now inundated with hundreds or even thousands of ads per day, click-through rates are becoming an increasingly vital statistic. Market researchers have been strategizing for decades about the best techniques to capture your time and attention. In recent years, big data has become one of their most valuable tools.

In some ways, this is no different than a sales associate recommending a product to a customer who walks in the store. However, others argue that a difference in quantity is a difference in kind. The amount of data available to advertisers is far greater than what a sales associate can tell just by looking at someone and could lead to exploitative or discriminatory marketing techniques.

The controversy is heightened because the vast majority of online ads run through Google's AdSense platform, meaning that targeted ad data gets consolidated in the hands of one company. This is an advantage because it means information doesn't have to

be distributed among all the companies that may want to advertise to an person. However, it also means a lot of data is clustered in one place, which may be a security risk.

In some cases, data may pass from the collecting company to a third party. These databases are myriad in function: Some are used for scientific analysis, others for market research, and sometimes, bad actors may use them for malicious purposes. Fortunately, however, most companies have incentives to keep user data to themselves. It is, after all, their biggest advantage.

"We have pipes of information that are constantly streaming past us, and whoever is going to learn how to take advantage of that is going to have the opportunity to do some things that others are going to miss out on," said physics professor Dr. Steve Gollmer, who leads data science seminars at Cedarville in an effort to get more students interested in data mining, the process of discovering patterns in large data sets.

In many cases, companies can use the data they collect to make their product better. Google Maps, for instance, uses location data from its active users to determine real-time traffic flow. Captchas, those little pictures you have to select to prove you're not a robot, train artificial intelligence programs to identify objects in pictures. Been identifying a lot of pictures to do with roads and cars lately? Think about why. (Hint: A lot of technology companies are interested in autonomous vehicles.)

Data mining can be used not only to improve a product, but to improve the world. As more data is available and algorithms improve at sorting through it, data science has become a significant resource for the scientific community in particular.

According to Gollmer, computer algo-

rithms of the past mined through data to model how human experts made decisions. For instance, to predict the weather, programmers interviewed respected meteorologists on what factors may indicate a coming rainstorm. That information was then be built into the algorithm, telling the computer to look at the same factors to make a prediction.

However, while useful for simple predictions under constrained conditions, these "expert systems" struggled to correctly identify outliers to the patterns they'd been prescribed. Whenever a situation didn't fit the model, the system failed.

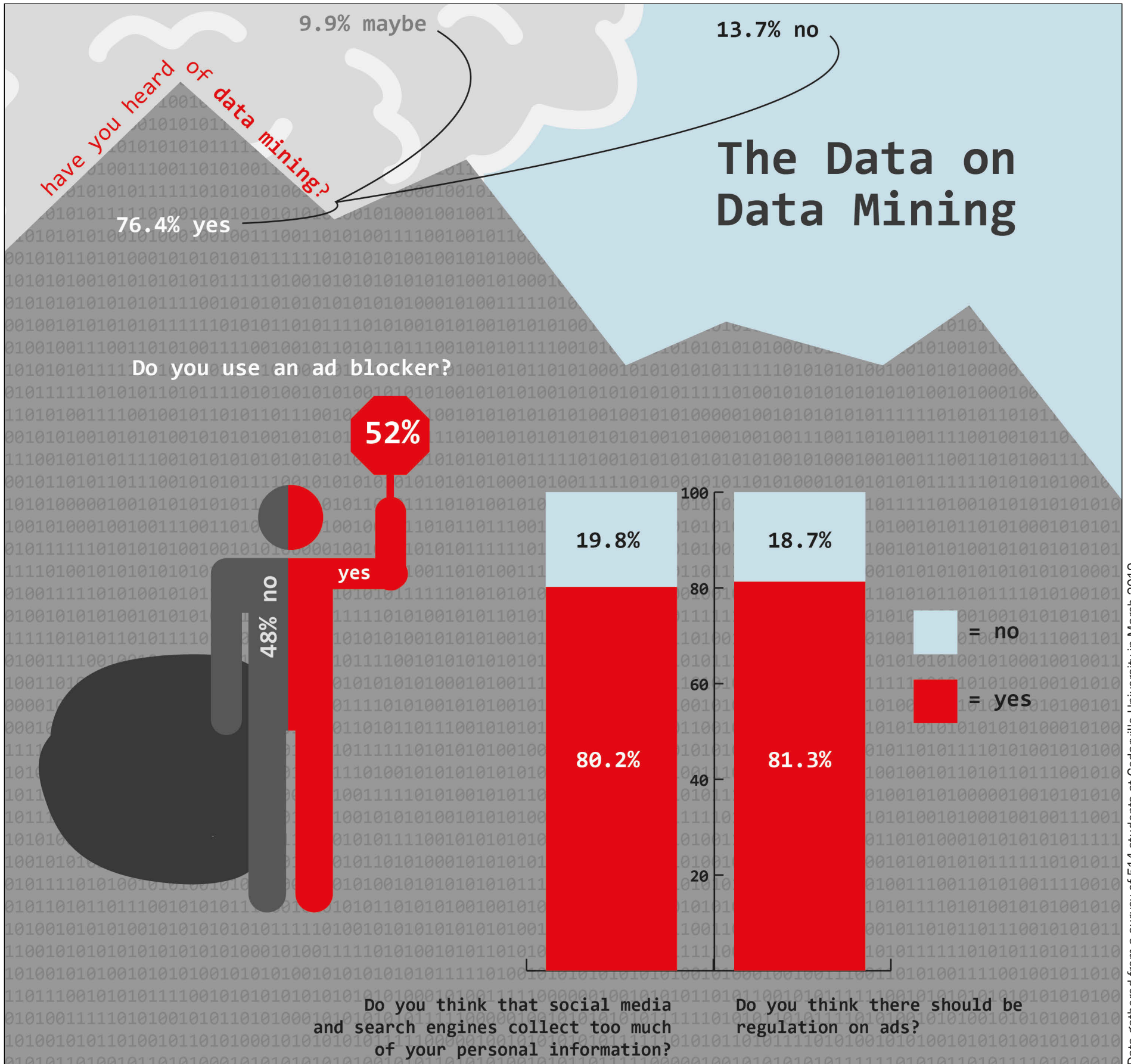
When the amount of data available exploded because of the rise of the internet, programmers experimented with a technique. Instead of inputting the knowledge of experts, analysts let the algorithms search through the data to find associations on their own. For instance, a program could examine historical weather data and atmospheric conditions to make a prediction. The programmer who wrote the algorithm may not know what factors the computer looks at to make that decision, but in many cases, the results can be even more accurate than human experts.

This development took the vast quantities of data available and made them legible. Some associations were obvious. Others were new and previously unpredicted, discovered only by a computer powerful enough to comb through terabytes of seemingly random strings of information that are the product of millions of human choices. These algorithms are the translators that make the collected data useful to humans looking to predict behavior, recommend products, describe correlations, or even diagnose diseases.

Data mining could also potentially prevent misdiagnosis by doctors resulting in improper drug administration. One 2017 study compiled data from patients using nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and gastroprotective agents, which require a particular clinical guideline for co-prescription. According to the study,

These companies aren't collecting data without a purpose. They're doing it because of real economic incentives.

OFF CAMPUS



Data gathered from a survey of 514 students at Cedarville University in March 2019.

“one-third of occasions where these medications were co-prescribed were inconsistent with guidelines.” This is a staggering level of misdiagnosis, and algorithmic sorting of the patients involved while protecting their private information could help prevent such mistakes in the future.

These are clinical examples, but with the popularization of smart watches with biosensors that can track blood pressure, oxygen saturation levels, heart rate and other health factors, medical data is now moving beyond the hospital and into the day-to-day. While the scope of these sensors is limited, the information collected could be used by companies or third-party specialists to help with disease prevention, tracking outbreaks, and alerting users of any potential issues they may develop. Already, Apple is experimenting with sending Apple Watch users notifications if their heart rate falls outside a certain range for more than 10 minutes.

Some have suggested that this data should be available to insurers as an option for preventive care or to doctors to help detect patterns that could factor into a diagnosis. However, others are concerned about medical privacy and may even fear being discriminated against based on their sensitive health history.

Data mining has other positive uses outside the medical field, including the realms of sociology, psychology, economics, communications and agricultural research. A 2018 study published in the scientific journal PLOS ONE found that based on soil moisture, temperature, rainfall, pH and organic carbon, data mining algorithms could predict CO₂ emissions with more than 80% accuracy, helping farmers effectively protect against climate change.

In this light, our data seems a reasonable price to pay for the advancement of society. Even if it seems worth it, though, it’s still important to recognize what is happening and where it goes — especially because sometimes, companies can mess up. Computer science professor Patrick Dudenhofer said this may be a significant risk as more and more companies collect user data.

“Unfortunately for most data that’s being stored, it’s not a matter of if it’s going to be hacked, but when,” Dudenhofer said.

“And the key feature of cybersecurity is that once the data is gone, it’s gone. Once it’s out there, it will never be private again.”

It’s a risk for databases at all levels: internet and technology businesses like T-Mobile, Netflix and Facebook; secure services like Equifax, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Marriott; government agencies like the Internal Revenue Service, the Office of Personnel Management and even the postal system. These organizations have the kind of data that includes not just your name, address, and phone number, but your credit information, your medical history and your children’s social security numbers.

However, the reality is that users don’t have much of a choice to opt out. Everyone is subject to the IRS — and in fairness, for many secure organizations, hacks are the exception rather than the rule. Other companies, though, are less careful. Just this month Facebook acknowledged that it had been storing millions of user passwords in unencrypted plain text, meaning any of thousands of Facebook employees could find them just by searching. Think about how many of your passwords are identical or even just similar to your Facebook password (might want to change that).

Yet it’s hardly their first data failure, which is significant because Facebook has become more than just another social media platform. First, it’s become nearly universal among populations with regular internet access. Forbes ranks Facebook fourth on its list of the world’s most valuable brands. Second, it’s a focal point for personal data, from the information you fill out for your profile to the political articles you comment on to the pictures friends post with your name tagged at a particular location. Third, consider how many other online accounts you can sign into using Facebook as a launchpad. In fact, some companies specifically force users to do this so they get more data than they otherwise would.

“It didn’t hurt them in the long run to

lose your account data,” Dudenhofer said. “It’s a matter of, do you trust that organization to both use that information responsibly and to keep it secure from other organizations? Which historically has been a ‘no’ on both counts.”

Most companies assure customers — or the segment of customers who are informed enough to raise concerns — that whatever data they collect is safely anonymized, stored in aggregate chunks detached from individual identifiers. This may be true, but as technology has advanced, it has become clear that anonymization is not enough.

Way back in the mid-1990’s, graduate student Lantanya Sweeney decided to test the system. She purchased a copy of the voter rolls of the city of Cambridge for \$20, which gave her personal details on every voter including name, birth date, sex, address and ZIP code. Comparing the voter rolls to “anonymized” state health records, she was able to send the governor of Massachusetts his entire medical history, including prescriptions and diagnoses.

In 2000, Sweeney went on to demonstrate that only three pieces of information — ZIP code, sex and birth date — were needed to uniquely identify 87% of all Americans.

As *Ars Technica* editor Nate Anderson pointed out, “Almost all information can be ‘personal’ when combined with enough other relevant bits of data.”

Since then, anonymization has marginally improved, and the amount of accessible data has exploded. While optimistic about many possible applications of data science, Gollmer expressed concern that the increasing amount of data available to, for example, employers or insurers may be unfairly detrimental to some people.

“It’s going to be there whether you like it or not,” Gollmer said. “But all that information is not necessarily indicative of who you are right now. When people pull information so far back, it’s used to give the impression that this person was this way back then and he or she is no different today.”

Data collection is exciting for some, terrifying to others and probably unavoidable for most.

The European Union has begun to implement legal standards to protect consumer privacy to a degree, but the United States has yet to show interest in following suit. There’s a tenuous balance between what falls under an person’s “right to be forgotten” and what is a matter of public record.

Lawmakers are trying to decide where that balance lies, as well as the technical practicality of regulating data collection and use. In a world where technology moves much faster than Congress, who wins the battle over data collection could guide the future power structure. According to University of Rochester professor Dr. Adam Frank, the “digital breadcrumbs” created by an person’s digital activity are mere particles in the larger picture, denoting the general patterns of society or its specific segments.

“Once you see the patterns,” Frank wrote in an article for NPR, “you can understand the world’s behavior. Once you understand behavior you can predict it. Once you can predict behavior you can control it. That is the true promise — and danger — of big data.”

Data is a promise because it is critical to the technology our society operates upon on a daily basis. It is a danger because of what happens when used incorrectly. If data is compromised, private information can be exposed, credit cards can be co-opted and identities can be stolen, which is why so many are concerned about its collection, legitimate or otherwise.

Data collection is exciting for some, terrifying to others and probably unavoidable for most. While many expect useful services, public platforms and unlimited entertainment to be provided free of charge online, it’s important to recognize the reality that every user of these sites and services pays a real price — just not a financial one.

Breanna Beers is a sophomore molecular and cellular biology major and a staff writer for Cedars. She loves exercising curiosity, hiking new trails, and quoting The Princess Bride whether it’s relevant or not.

Kassie Kirsch is a junior English major and a staff writer for off-campus news. She loves the outdoors, animals of all kinds and reading more books than she should.

Network Update:

The costs and capabilities of 5G

by Jacob Oedy

By the end of June, the world is expected to experience another jump in technological capability: the introduction of 5G networks.

As stated by *techradar.com*, “5G networks are the next generation of mobile internet connectivity, offering faster speeds and more reliable connections on smartphones and other devices than ever before.”

The introduction of 5G will require users to purchase a new wave of mobile devices and companies to install advanced equipment. Tech companies believe the switch will be worthwhile and revolutionary.

5G will rapidly improve downloads and signal strength, with download speeds of multiple gigabytes per second. It will also reduce latency, the lag that often accompanies internet searches and streaming.

Beyond mobile and cellular devices, 5G will influence and affect the capabilities of cutting edge technology in various fields. 5G will allow simultaneous pairing and connection between an unprecedented number of devices. Self-driving cars could connect to one another and street side sensors to navigate safely and securely. Reduced latency and increased connectivity will reduce the risk of using robotics, opening the door for medical implementations.

However, the United States is late to the game on 5G. China has reportedly been experimenting with “fifth generation” technology since September of 2018. In cooperation with the government of Fangshan, an otherwise unremarkable district near Beijing, the mobile giant China Mobile installed a series of 5G cell towers last fall. Since then, they have used the new technology to test and improve autonomous vehicles.

Meanwhile, companies like Sprint, AT&T, Samsung and Verizon have been clamoring to adapt the new capabilities to mobile devices.

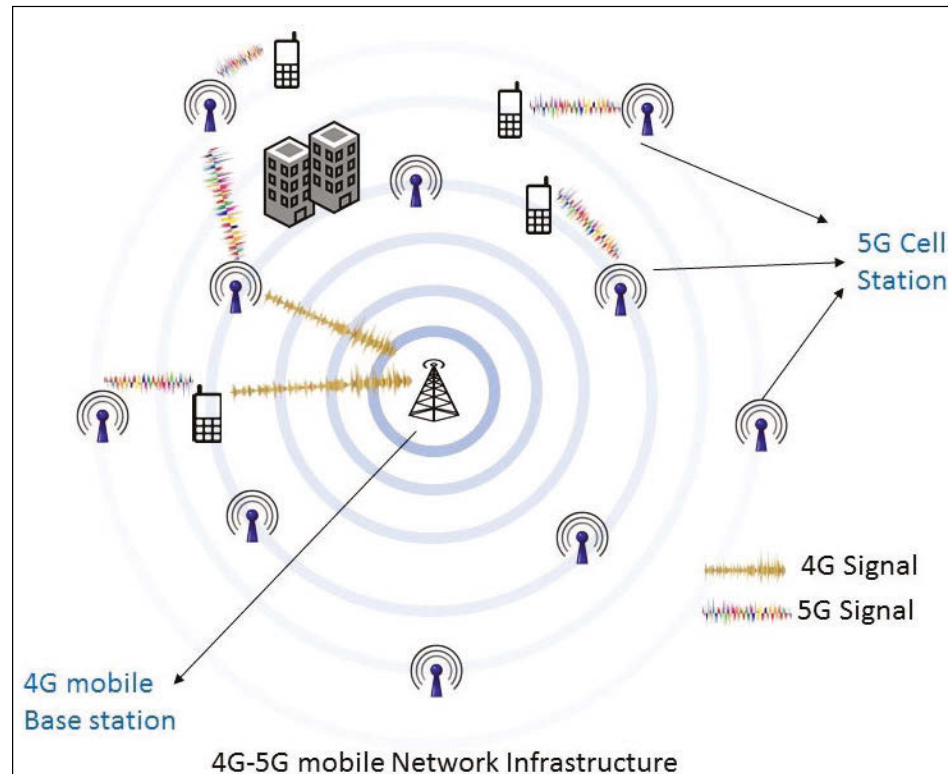


Photo from Wikimedia Commons

5G networks will rely on smaller nodes with limited range attached to infrastructure.

Companies such as Nokia and Ericsson have already penned agreements to pair the new capabilities with their products. Even President Trump has entered the 5G conversation, urging U.S. mobile companies to “step up their efforts or get left behind.”

Yet, while mobile companies, politicians and the media buzz with new information about the rapidly approaching 5G, many citizens remain ignorant about the new network’s capability or even its existence.

According to a CNN report, 5G devices could aid in the medical profession, allow-

ing medical professionals to “screen and diagnose patients remotely,” even from “thousands of miles away.” This is possible because 5G transmits data in almost real-time, making remote surgery possible.

5G networks may also enable the creation of “smart cities.” Governments worldwide may introduce technology to the infrastructure of municipal operations. The potential plan would integrate 5G technology into everything from public transportation and power supply to sanitation and efficient urban mobility.

Cities like Singapore and Dubai have already invested in smart programs, but the upcoming rollout of 5G networks will push the initiative forward.

With various organizations, industries, and gov-

ernments anticipating the new capabilities unlocked by 5G, some have stopped to question the new networks. AT&T and Verizon have promised 5G devices and networks before the halfway point of 2019, leaving concerned politicians, analysts and citizens to wonder if the world has committed to the technological evolution without considering the cost.

Beyond safety concerns regarding the potential hacking or misuse of 5G powered devices, such as self-driving cars, critics have also voiced worry about negative effects to human health.

On March 29, the Daily Camera of Boulder, Colorado reported that a city councilwoman, Cindy Carlisle, sent her colleagues a video about the potential dangers of 5G.

“I’m not an expert,” said Carlisle, “but it seems we need more information before we start saturating our community more than it is with any more G’s ... there are deep issues. In terms of public health and safety, I would rather see us err on the side of taking more time and actually trying to get a study session together before we go ahead and sign agreements with those whose purpose it is to put 5G in the community.”

An article by *Eluxe Magazine* explored the potential dangers, explaining that the increased antenna and signals required for the new networks to operate would immerse the world in a veritable cloud of radio frequency radiation. The article cited studies linking RFR with cases of cancer, tissue deterioration, disruption of cell metabolism, and other potential health risks. With leading mobile companies promising that 5G will be available in a matter of months, there’s no doubt these lightning-fast advancements will be here soon.

Jacob Oedy is a freshman journalism major and a staff writer for off-campus news and arts and entertainment. He enjoys creative writing, quoting TV shows, and hanging out with the best hall on campus, Brock 3 East.

AT&T and Verizon have promised 5G devices and networks before the halfway point of 2019.

Millions of Millennials Move away from Facebook

For many young people, social media is growing stale



Photo courtesy of Ian Sarmiento

Ian Sarmiento removed himself from all social media before starting college.

by Callahan Jones and Paolo Carrion

Before entering his freshman year at college, Ian Sarmiento deleted all of his social media accounts. “I realized that my social media use wasn’t healthy at all,” Sarmiento, a sophomore broadcasting major at Cedarville University, said. “It got to the point where I would try to tell someone a story and they would already know about it because I got tagged ... on Facebook.”

The choice to leave social media is not limited to just Sarmiento. Facebook itself is becoming less popular on a national level.

Facebook is seeing its first decline in active users since its launch in 2004. According to Fast Company, a business magazine, teenagers don’t find Facebook “cool,” which may explain why an estimated one million teenagers are leaving the social media platform a year.

This trend is not only among the youngest of users. Pew Research found Facebook usage among people 18-29 years old has decreased from 88 to 81% from 2016 to 2018. Among all online adults, usage of Facebook has decreased from 79 to 68%. Adults who say they check



Illustration by Katie Wingert

Facebook at least weekly has risen, from 15 to 23%, while those who say they check the service multiple times a day has fallen from 55 to 51%.

Dr. Robert Parr, a senior professor of sociology at Cedarville, said the decrease in Facebook usage could simply be a symptom of weariness.

“We live in a society where people grow tired of things,” he said.

Parr also said it’s likely that young people want to do something different from their parents. They may not be interested in the information they’ll find on Facebook, which will largely be updates from the older generation.

While he does not use social media himself, Parr has read about the subject as a sociology expert and hears about Facebook from his wife, who uses the platform frequently.

“She says ‘there’s just a lot of junk and nonsense out there,’” Parr said. “You want to spend the least amount of time as possible getting to what you want. And if you have to sort through a bunch of stuff in which you’re not interested, then maybe there’s another platform ... [where you don’t] have to sort through all that other stuff.”

Nate Stahlnecker, a Cedarville computer engineering student, is also skeptical about the content on Facebook. While he does have an account, he rarely uses it.

“After getting a [Facebook] account, I think I realized fairly quickly that I didn’t actually care all that much about what people had to say,” Stahlnecker said.

Stahlnecker said he used the service most in late middle school to early high school when he grew interested in politics.

“I would do the occasional political rant or reply to someone who I found particularly ignorant,” he said. “And I don’t think that was particularly healthy.”

Now Stahlnecker rarely uses Facebook. He does not have the Facebook app on his iPad, his primary mobile device, and does not have accounts on other social media like Instagram or Snapchat. After high school, he deleted many of his “friends” from the platform.

“I just didn’t feel the need to hear from them anymore,” he said.

Stahlnecker, however, does use Messenger, Facebook’s instant messaging service, in lieu of texting.

“I like to be able to talk to one person at a time,” Stahl-



Photo courtesy of Nate Stahlnecker

Nate Stahlnecker personally finds no use for social media. “I would do the occasional political rant or reply to someone who I found particularly ignorant,” he said. “And I don’t think that was particularly healthy.”

necker said. “I’ve never really been about the ‘hey everybody, here’s what I’m doing’ kind of platform.”

He also uses YouTube, which he appreciates because it allows him to search specifically for the content he wants. Whereas Facebook and other social media can just be a waste of time.

“You wind up stuck in there looking at stuff that, honestly, does not improve the quality of your day,” he said. “Even the positive stuff — it’s just not really worth my time.”

Stahlnecker said that while his friends have accounts on social media, they have a “healthy skepticism” of the platforms.

“There does seem to be a growing disdain, at least for certain websites. ... I don’t know whether that’s because our interests have changed with age and maturity, or whether that’s because general public opinion is shifting — might be some of both,” he said. “I think that most of [my friends] understand that it’s not worthy of more than five minutes of their time in a day.”

Besides being a waste of time, Stahl-

necker noted that there are some concerns about social media’s political bias.

“I do think it’s a little bit concerning that, Facebook for instance, thinks that they need to take it upon themselves to determine what kind of speech is available on their platform,” he said. “I thought the purpose [of social media] was to be ... a medium for free discourse. And it seems that they’ve decided of late that they’d rather be publishers. Which I don’t think is a wise step for them, because it makes them responsible for every word spoken on their platform.”

Parr also noted the growing concern of social media’s bias in terms of filtering out specific information.

“The issue is that sinners use this technology,” he said. “And so, unfortunately, it’s going to be often, an expression of a fallen nature that we as sinners have.”

These concerns and thoughts about the Facebook platform may show where its future lies. As people become more disillusioned with the world that Facebook has created for them, more and more people might leave the service. Whether or not this will actually be true is yet to be seen. Or, it may be that people simply don’t care about whether or not what Facebook presents is true.

Although Facebook seems to be declining, Parr said he believes that social media as a whole will continue to grow. However, while social media can be used effectively by ministries and outreach, it can also be used to spread lies and misinformation.

“I think social media has a bright future, in terms of expansion,” Parr said. “Whether it’ll be beneficial or not is another thing.”

Callahan Jones is a senior journalism major and the digital and design editor for Cedars. In his free time, he enjoys making coffee, being overly critical about music and playing games with friends.

Paolo Carrion is a junior journalism major and the Arts and Entertainment section editor for Cedars. He is learning how to cook, and his roommate is very proud of the sri-racha-glazed chicken he made for dinner that one time.

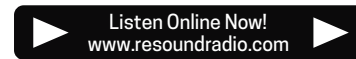
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The Politics of the Platform

Twitter's role in public polarization

by Breanna Beers

From “fake news” to “covfefe,” President Donald Trump’s tweets have become almost as famous as the man himself. Often fuel for his detractors, occasionally alarming even to his supporters and, if nothing else, entertaining for those able to sufficiently distance themselves from the actual policy implications, Trump’s Twitter account has provided an immeasurable amount of free publicity for the sitting president.

While he may have been among the first to take full advantage of all the platform has to offer, Trump’s use of Twitter is not unique among politicians. More and more public figures are following the president’s model with varying degrees of success, opening Twitter almost reflexively in response to any major or minor event.

In many ways, Twitter perfectly combines the online competition for attention with the political push for polarization to produce the increasingly inflammatory behavior of politicians both online and off. Twitter’s inherently limited nature and tendency to devolve into shouting matches simplifies the story into a clear “us vs. them” narrative.

Why Twitter? Why not Facebook, which many think of as the original home of internet battles? According to communication professor Andrew Harris, the structure of Twitter lends itself to the type of debate today’s politicians love.

“It’s not built for ‘listening’ rhetoric, where we’re trying to get to the truth,” Harris said. “It’s built for ‘win’ rhetoric, where we’re trying to defeat an opponent.”

According to Harris, Twitter tends toward two things: sarcastic humor and invective “cultural lampooning.” It’s an effective tool to take other people down, whether that’s through ironic wit or strident argumentation. It didn’t create this form of communication, just like it didn’t create the polarization it proliferates. Twitter does, however, provide an outlet and rewards those who take full advantage of it.”



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

Follow

You just can't win with the Fake News Media. A big story today is that because I have pushed so hard and gotten Gasoline Prices so low, more people are driving and I have caused traffic jams throughout our Great Nation. Sorry everyone!

4:36 PM - 21 Nov 2018

Picture taken from Twitter

President Trump defending himself via Twitter.

Harris identified a number of features that contribute to this. First, the foundational limit of a 280-character cap; second, the isolating effect that tends to pull a single tweet out of the context of a broader conversation; third, the fact that replying to someone on Twitter necessarily calls attention to their point and draws in an excited crowd eager to defend their champion.

“If you are trying to meaningfully engage with other people who have other opinions, you’re not going to be successful on Twitter,” Harris said. “As soon as you engage someone who has a different opinion than you, then you become a tool in that person’s arsenal for their followers.”

Politics professor Dr. Mark Caleb Smith summarized it succinctly: “Twitter doesn’t work for persuasion; it works for reinforcement.”

While on platforms like Facebook, shouting matches happen between friends and friends of friends, Twitter is for communication with strangers, especially famous strangers. Further, according to a study by the The Next Web, more than 80% of Twitter users follow significantly more people than they are followed by. Twitter is inherently a viewer-based platform, lending itself to the kinds of interactions that seize immediate attention

rather than thoughtful consideration.

“Twitter is not a town hall mentality; Twitter is a coliseum mentality,” Harris said. “People who have 1,000 followers or higher are starting to enter into this realm of being a Twitter champion, where they are going to be the ones down in the arena duking it out with someone else.”

The platform rewards those who fight to win: Trump has nearly 60 million followers on Twitter, but barely one-fifth of that on Instagram.

Similarly, according to Smith, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is powerful “not because she’s got votes from her district, but ... because she’s leveraged social media in such a way that Democrats are afraid of her.”

Both these politicians understand the microculture of Twitter and know how to take advantage of it in a way that most of their colleagues don’t. They know who their audience is and who their opponents are. They are aware that audiences are looking for entertainment and journalists for the outrageous. They recognize that success in the media is measured in minutes. Attention is the new currency, and on Twitter, they’ve found the formula for their fortune.

“These polarized tribal approaches are

easy shorthands,” Smith said. “You don’t have to know a lot; you just have to know who you hate.”

In addition to a captive public audience, Twitter also lets Trump and Ocasio-Cortez enjoy the attention of a more selective group, one that’s more active on Twitter than any other social media platform: journalists.

Twitter is a valuable tool for the news industry: a resource to tap into for easy articles and prove the institution’s lingering relevance in the digital age. Journalists have an economic incentive to highlight Twitter battles, thus legitimizing the platform’s polarizing power. Twitter allows journalists to dialogue directly with politicians, mobilize public opinion, and get a quick read on the general response to current issues. In many ways, Twitter has become both the new press release and the new public opinion poll. However, Twitter’s opinions aren’t necessarily America’s — while 24% of U.S. adults use Twitter, 80% of those are affluent urban millennials with a college degree, according to Twitter’s business page and Pew Research Center.

The Pew Research Center also found that Twitter’s reaction to major political events tended to differ widely from the reaction of general survey respondents — Twitter users were always overwhelmingly more negative and more polarized than the general public. This is a result of the platform’s incentives.

Twitter will always naturally tend toward the kind of content its structure inherently favors: that which is pithy, shallow and incendiary. Twitter is full of built-in incentives, and the people who cater to that kind of content are the ones who will inevitably succeed. As the 2020 election cycle approaches, recognize that the story Twitter tends to tell is not necessarily the complete one. The real world is more complex than can fit in 280 characters.

Breanna Beers is a sophomore molecular and cellular biology major and a staff writer for Cedars. She loves exercising curiosity, hiking new trails, and quoting “The Princess Bride” whether it’s relevant or not.

Social Media's Twofold Impact on Recruiting

Both coaches and players find it easier to assess each other online

by *Tim Miller*

The rise of social media has created a stream of new opportunity in the battle for recruiting and securing coveted high school athletes. The days of personal visits and letters are primarily in the past, and instant pictures, posts, tweets and videos provide recruits with a flow of information that makes their commitment decision much easier.

Social media has changed the recruiting landscape in two major aspects. Coaches now get to advertise their programs with unlimited posts and nonexistent marketing expenses. Players, on the other hand, enjoy premium content and unrestricted access to any university he may be interested in.

Additionally, players and coaches can connect through direct messages. Rather than a coach chasing down a high school coach for a player's contact information, he can simply shoot a quick message to get connected and start a conversation.

All-access pass

Cedarville University head volleyball coach Greg Smith recognizes this shift and has taken steps within his program to ride the social media wave. Smith hired Callie Murphy as his assistant this spring, and she's taken over the team social media accounts in an attempt to give potential players a behind-the-scenes look to the Lady Jackets program.

Smith said pushing out content on a daily basis is crucial because then the account can grab recruits' attention. The account features a variety of posts, from practicing in the sand to showing offseason workouts. Further, he wants to drive home the most unique aspect of Cedarville.

"The biggest thing is for us to show why we're doing what we're doing," Smith said. "This is an avenue to share our testimony."

Men's basketball coach Pat Estep reinforced that posting frequently is important to getting in front of recruits and piquing their interest. Any time new gear comes in or a graphic can be released, he wants it on social media.

"In terms of what we can present about our program, it's given us a huge advantage," Estep said. "It's made it a lot easier in some ways. Fifteen years ago, you had to write letters and print off pictures of your facilities. Now, you can just post stuff and it doesn't cost you anything."

Knowing the player before knowing the player

Coaches can now get a better understanding for a potential commit's character before even meeting him. Rather than giving a teen a call over the phone or traveling to unknown parts to find his house for a meet and greet, coaches can look up a player's Twitter account to see if a five-hour drive to Nowheresville, West Virginia, is worth it.

"You can learn a lot about a kid on social media," Estep said. "Usually, that's our first resort when we're recruiting a kid."

Estep said his program has a system for evaluating potential transfer enrollees that rests solely on the use of social media. Mimicking a traffic light, players can receive either a green, yellow or red grade based only on what is seen on social media.

If a player sprinkles Bible verses, worship songs, and the likes throughout his account, Estep and his assistants will give the player a green light. Should a player post no content that displays a Cedarville-esque worldview yet he indicates no tendency to go out and get plastered every weekend, the player will receive a yellow light. Estep said any posts with out-of-line speech about women, profanity or substance abuse will get the player a red grade, which gets them effectively crossed off Estep's list.

Smith echoed Estep's take, saying social media has become an important piece of the evaluation process.

"Social media will tell us in a lot of ways who they truly are," Smith said. "Their language, the company they keep, how they dress, all are ingrained in them. We want to make sure we're getting the right person."

Players can also market themselves to potential scouts. Especially for football and basketball players, posting highlight videos gives players the chance to show off their top plays. However, neither Smith nor Estep put too much stock into the videos.

Smith said he'd much rather see a player on the court, especially in how she conducts herself in between plays. Estep said that while some videos can be impressive, rarely do the reels show what he needs to see. The two-time NCCAA Coach of the Year said unless a player shows he can score in multiple ways in his videos, the video will have no effect.

The upsurge in social media has given coaches and players alike a more streamlined recruiting process. Cycles are shorter and information and program's energy are easier to sort through. It seems most programs are giving their



3:28 PM · 3/6/19 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Photo taken from Twitter

A dunk by freshman Quinton Green made it on Overtime's Twitter account, which has over 280,000 followers.

best shot to producing professional and consistent content, and Smith said the biggest focus is on promoting steady, entertaining content.

"We're always trying to think of new things about CU and fun facts about our team," Smith said. "We're always trying to keep it fresh."

Tim Miller is a junior marketing major and sports editor for Cedars. He enjoys having a baby face, knowing too much about supplemental insurance, and striving to perfect the optimal combination of Dwight Schrute and Ron Swanson.

Female Sports' Popularity Rising Due to Social Media

by Abby Hintz

The difference between male and female sports is a topic that dominates conversations in the world of sports. Outside factors such as pay, airtime and viewership contribute to both sides of the argument, but there is no denying the recent positive shift in the perception of female sports.

Powerful female athletes are stepping up and sharing their stories, which has led to a growing interest in their sports. The tool that is making all this possible is social media.

Star athletes like Ronda Rousey, Serena Williams and Alex Morgan, use social media to promote sponsors, give advice and show fans parts of their lives they wouldn't otherwise know about.

They have the ability to impact millions of people through their social media — 28.8 million through their Instagrams combined.

It is well-known that male and female athletes are not viewed equally. Because of the way God created the female, the performance and caliber levels of females often is not on par with males. Therefore, the sports media world tends to place male sports on a pedestal, while female sports fight to reach it.

However, now that female professional athletes do not have to rely solely on broadcasts to share their talents and their stories, they have developed a unique following that is influenced by their presence on social media.

Grace Norman, a Paralympian and junior cross country and track athlete at Cedarville, has seen the impact of social media first hand since her time at the 2016 Paralympics where she came away with a gold and bronze medal.

For Norman, social media has been a way to share her inspiring story which has prompted others to share their stories in return.

Looking at this from her Christian background, she can fully appreciate the



Photo courtesy of Grace Norman

Grace Norman, gold and bronze medal Paralympian, has enjoyed an elevated platform thanks to her global success in running.

possibilities.

“Female athletes in general have been pretty good at just promoting themselves and wanting others to come along,” Norman said. “I think females have done a really good job encouraging other females to get involved in sports. And that’s obviously going to raise a higher caliber in sports.”

Norman was diagnosed with congenital constriction band syndrome of the left leg at birth, causing her to lose the limb. Her story

has influenced people from all over through her trip to the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro and her life at Cedarville.

More than anything though, she has been able to share her story through social media.

“It’s kind of a two-way street,” Norman said. “I can share my story; people can share their stories with me. It’s a very important part of growing the people who know who you are.”

Logistically, social media has given all

athletes the opportunity to get their name and their story out into the world. This often comes in the form of sponsorships.

As Norman closes in on the end of her college career, sponsorships are becoming more and more important.

“My coach has been a big push for social media,” Norman said. “He’s like, ‘Just post once a day just get your name out there once a day. People will see it. Play the game of social media.’ It’s a huge part of what it is to be a professional athlete nowadays.”

Norman also made a point to acknowledge the dangerous side of sponsorships, especially for female athletes.

“A lot of female sports can be pushed toward the sexual side,” she said. “Whereas [for] men, that’s not really the focus. But if it’s used just to get your sport and your name out there in a modest way, I think it can elevate it to equality because that’s what it should be focused on in sports.”

What people love about sports are the stories — the epic comebacks and the dominating victories. People love athletes for the unlikely success they often find themselves in. No matter their background, as long as they have work ethic and maybe a little bit of God-given talent, they can make it to the top. Social media has made these triumphant stories much more accessible.

Norman said she believed social media has played a huge part in raising female sports awareness. The ease of access to freely promote an athlete allows for women to earn increased recognition.

“People will emulate them because they have the perfect workout or they’re just encouraging people,” Norman said. “So, I think it has been a really good platform in order to get more women into sports.”

Abigail Hintz is a freshman journalism major and sports writer for Cedars. She loves sending people GIFs, reading books and watching way more soccer than the average person.

College Sports and Social Media:

An advantageous relationship

by *Tim Smith*

Collegiate sports programs have been using social media since its inception. Cedarville teams have been no exception.

“Primarily, our social media presence is used to promote our team and create a positive view of men’s tennis at Cedarville,” said Ryan Cvammen, a sophomore and a member of the Yellow Jackets men’s tennis team.

Being an athlete is not the only role on Cvammen’s resume. He’s also involved with the team off the court, running the team’s social media accounts.

Nowadays, anybody and everybody has a social media account. The world is filled to the brim with tweets, Instagram posts and Facebook updates. It’s almost a necessity in today’s world, and sports teams are no exception to this rule.

But, for many, a social media account is used to post personal pictures, update others on their lives or rant to the general public.

How does this translate for a college sports team?

Aaron Horn joined the Cedarville men’s basketball program this season as a volunteer assistant. He’s taken on the role of social media director.

“Our social presence gives students, fans, and recruits an inside look at our team,” Horn said. “The content we create is utilized to create engagement.”

Sports teams must use their social media presence to promote their team and give inside looks to the day-to-day culture of the team. They can post highlights, updates, statistics and other team information. Some sports teams, though, have to work harder than others.

“Tennis is a sport that doesn’t have a crazy amount of fans, so our social media has to promote our team and keep followers updated on outcomes and events,” Cvammen said.

Using social media to this end is one of



Photo courtesy Cedarville Yellow Jackets
Ryan Cvammen, a sophomore tennis player, runs the social media accounts for the men’s team. “Primarily, our social media presence is used to promote our team and create a positive view of men’s tennis at Cedarville,” Cvammen said.

the best ways to increase popularity. Consumer insight service Experian Simmons reported in 2015 that 98% of all college-age students use social media. So, teams can easily increase their campus presence by creating and using a social media account, as Cvammen seeks to do with his usage of

the tennis Instagram page.

On the other hand, some sports do not need as much help increasing popularity for their sport, so their social media accounts are used for other means.

“All of our social media platforms enable us to produce content that highlights

our program,” said Horn. “We try and make our content unique to the culture [head] coach Estepp has created.”

The basketball team does not have to rely on their social media to increase popularity on campus, so they use their presence to promote the team’s focus for the year.

For example, the Cedarville men’s basketball team had a focus statement of “Fear One, Fear None” this year. Horn was able to emphasize this point through every post and update on their social media. A viewer could not leave the basketball social media without seeing the team’s focus in some way or form.

The team also used the popularity of the CU Towel Gang in some posts during the 2018-19 season. Further, graphics and posts from inside the locker room was another outlet for the Yellow Jackets to show off their environment.

Whether it’s increasing sport popularity or emphasizing team focus, one thing is clear among all the teams — social media is a necessity in today’s world.

“Social media is important nowadays — everybody has one,” Cvammen said. “It is important to have a strong social media presence in order for a team to stay relevant in the changing times that we live in.”

The social media presence of a sports team is an important aspect of the team overall, and it is one that is often overlooked.

Some teams are able to use a multi-tasker, such as Cvammen. Other teams must find help elsewhere, like the basketball team did with Horn. Nonetheless, if a team wants to stay relevant and popular in the world today, using Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to their advantage is a must.

Tim Smith is a freshman journalism major and staff writer for Cedars. He loves football, 3 Musketeers candy and primarily speaking in movie quotes.

Esports Emerging

Competitive videogames have created a new breed of virtual athlete



Photo from Riot Games

Every year League of Legends professional play culminates in the League Championship Series World Championship. The 2018 tournament was held in Incheon, South Korea.

by Callahan Jones

Over the past three decades, video gamers have been a massive rising force throughout both American and global culture. Now, competitive leagues for the world's most popular video games bring hundreds of millions of eyes to online streams and thousands of spectators to massive stadiums around the world.

Colleges both large and small have started teams for these games and are handing out scholarships to the most promising high school players.

In late March, the first trading card game ever made, Magic: The Gathering, showed off its first major pro level digital tournament over a period of four days, bringing in hundreds of thousands of viewers. Large media companies such as Fox

and ESPN have started rebroadcasting and covering Counter Strike: Global Offensive and League of Legends tournaments.

These games are changing the face of popular entertainment and what can be considered impressive feats.

Why are esports popular?

Many people are confused by the popularity of these esports, as they have been labeled, but for many people of newer generations who enjoy gaming, it's no surprise at all.

"Since I already play the games that [professional gamers] are playing, it helps me appreciate their skill," said Jeremy Tiberg, a Cedarville student and avid League of Legends professional play viewer. "I know the fundamentals of the game, but much like sports, they display a mastery of the game that is really exciting to watch. There's

a small 'maybe I could do that' that doesn't really translate with other sports."

That's exactly why these games are so popular. Much like more traditional sports, players of video games like to watch professionals perform feats they could never (or maybe just maybe ... could) do. These pro scenes also give things for average players to aspire and look up to. Maybe some day, they will be just as good their favorite pro.

The games that are prominent in esports are partially so popular thanks to the size of their playerbases.

The most played video game in the world, League of Legends, is also the most popular esports. The game's Twitch channel — the most used option for livestreaming games to large audiences — was the first to reach one billion views, a feat it achieved earlier this year.

How did esports come about?

But how did these games get to this point? How did these competitive leagues and huge playerbases find their love for watching other players play the game? It's mainly thanks to two games: Starcraft: Brood War, a hardcore strategy game first released in 1998 that pits the armies of two players against each other, and League of Legends, a game that pits two teams of five players against each other to try to destroy the other team's base.

Of course, game tournaments did happen before the release of Blizzard Entertainment's Starcraft in 1998. Starting in the late '70s and for much of the '80s and '90s, the company Twin Galaxies organized large arcade game tournaments all around the United States, pitting player against player to get the highest scores. As these tournaments wore off in popularity and video games moved from arcades into the home, people were eager for a new way to be able to express their competitive tendencies through games.

With the turn of the century came the internet, and with the internet came the abilities for online multiplayer games. The first of these games to hit it big in this space was Starcraft: Brood War.

Starcraft wasn't originally developed to be a large multiplayer hit. Interestingly enough, it wasn't actually very popular in its target market, North America. It instead became incredibly successful in South Korea, a country for which the game wasn't even localized.

It's popularity — and the ongoing popularity of many multiplayer games in the country — can be largely chalked up to the rise of internet cafes, or PC bangs. These cafes feature large amounts of computers with many games loaded onto them, that users can then pay an hourly rate to play on. This was the main way that many people in South Korea played games then, and it's how they play games now.

Starcraft caught on in these cafes and soon caught on around the rest of the world. From this popularity sprung many pro teams and tournaments. Since the game's inception, over \$4 million has been given out to various tournaments winners and teams.

Once Starcraft caught on in popularity, other companies realized that they too could make competitive, online multiplayer games that people would enjoy. Games such as Counter Strike: Global Offensive, Defense of the Ancients 2, Starcraft 2 and Call of Duty began to dominate the scene, gaining millions of dollars in sponsors and turning that money into prize payouts to grow their casual brand appeal.

Then came League of Legends, the world's most popular game. Literally. Published by Riot Games in 2009, it now boasts a playerbase of over 120 million unique players a month (slightly smaller than the entire nation of Japan). One of its most recent premier tournaments, the 2018



Photo from Wikimedia Commons

Tournament competitors play in a League of Legends at a tournament in Paris. League of Legends tournaments are held across

World Finals, boasted 97 million unique viewers and had a prize pool of over \$1 million dollars.

"The League of Legends World Championship (LCS) is like the Super Bowl and the World Cup rolled into one," Whalen Rozelle, director of esports operations at Riot Games said in an interview with Fortune. "We have a very similar World Cup format because League of Legends is truly a global sport with most of the continents and many different countries represented."

What's next for esports?

These esports are ubiquitous now thanks to the popularity of the games involved and the size of their playerbases. They got popular thanks to people truly enjoying the type of gameplay that they offer. But what does the future of esports look like?

Many are optimistic. Viewer numbers and sponsorship eagerness seems to be going only up and up. Statista, a projection firm, thinks that esports viewership will grow to as high as 600 million people by 2020. Research firm Newzoo estimates that global esports awareness will reach 2 billion by 2021.

One of the most exciting aspects to some is that it is probably not yet known which game will truly make the best esports. Rocket League, a game in which teams of players essentially play soccer with rocket powered cars, is the one that many professionals have selected, due to its possible crossover appeal and easy-to-understand concept and gameplay.

"[Esports] has had a straight-up trajectory," said Peter Guber, co-owner of the Golden State Warriors, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles FC and the Golden Guardians League of Legends professional team. "Esports and egaming hasn't plateaued when somebody went off to college. It's bigger in college; and after college, the audience continues to consume it both as players and watchers, and observers in location-based entertainment, on PCs, on mobile. You have a device that makes people digitally aware, and so this fits right into the sweet spot."

Callahan Jones is a senior journalism major and the digital and design editor for Cedars. In his free time, he enjoys making coffee, being overly critical about music and playing games with friends.

Films and their Critics

Cedarville discusses how online movie reviews affect audiences' perception

by Hunter Johnson

For decades, audiences only had one source for film criticism: the newspaper. These professional film critics were highly respected and lauded as the be-all and end-all of a film's quality. This is mainly because no one else had an outlet to express their own views of a film to a wide group of people.

This started changing toward the 21st century. More and more film critics became popular and, over time, general movie-going audiences began expressing their opinions of film on the newly birthed World Wide Web.

Now anyone can criticize a film — YouTube, Twitter, and countless blogs have become a housing place for millions of people calling themselves film reviewers.

Where does this place film critics? What role do people, who were previously the only voice in film criticism, have in this new age of media and constant discussion?

In the world at large, film criticism has only gotten bigger. There are countless news sources online that provide in-depth reviews and analyses on films and what they mean. Rotten Tomatoes is largely responsible for this. The popular aggregator website gives a sense of organization to the enormous world of film criticism by gathering all professional critics and providing a consensus on how many of those critics generally liked a film and how many of them didn't. The site also provides a section where anyone can add their thoughts of a film, creating a general audience consensus.

This separation between critics and audiences keeps the need for film critics alive. It separates the people who analyze films as a career from the people who may not be as trained in analyzing films, but have very real opinions nonetheless.

But, let's take a step back and remind ourselves of what the role of a critic really is. Should they be the decider of a film's quality

or should they simply be another person in the audience?

Isaac Mayeux, assistant professor of English and a fan of comics and movies, said this about film critics:

"People should probably not try to treat critic's reviews as being authoritative in any way, so much as a person's opinion. And hopefully, if it's a good critic, they're saying a lot more than just, 'I

situation. Many critics really do focus on the technical sides of a film rather than the ideas the film is trying to get across (me being one of those kinds of people), and even when critics do look at the social ideas of a film, many audiences still misunderstand them for claiming to be "authoritative," as Mayeux put it.

Cedars conducted an informal survey of 100 students on campus regarding film

perception of a film's quality. Many audiences look up a film like "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," and all they notice is the big 91% listed beside it. They take this as saying that the film's score is a definite 91 out of a 100, but it's not. All this means is that 91% of the critics generally liked the film and 9% of the critics didn't. Many of those 91% of reviews lay out all the problems they had with the film. They still arrived at the conclusion that they liked it while still acknowledging its flaws. But most audiences don't read those reviews, they're just angry because they disagree with the general consensus of critics, resulting in a 44% score from audiences.

All of these problems that audiences have with critics lead to them eventually ignore critics entirely. When surveying those same Cedarville students, 52% of them said that they don't check reviews at all before watching films. Many said that if they really want to see a film, they're not going to let a critic tell them not to see it.

Cedarville's Dan Clark, an associate professor of English and co-creator of the Foreign Film series on campus, echoed this idea.

"If there's a film I want to see, I'll probably see it no matter what the critics are saying," he said. However, if a film that he was previously uninterested in receives positive reviews, it might encourage him to watch it. Clark understands that the critics simply are stating an opinion and not making a judgment on the film's objective quality.

This idea that the critic's job is to tell audiences what to believe is flawed. Perhaps some critics believe they are the authority on a film's quality, but most openly claim to simply be stating their opinions. They love films and want to be honest with what they think about them.

But then there's another issue. Many audiences want to watch films for entertainment purposes rather than analyzing the film and its social issues.

Mayeux said that people are doing a



Retrieved from www.vintagemovieposters.co.uk

"Star Wars: The Last Jedi" received a 91% from film critics and a 44% from audiences on Rotten Tomatoes.

liked this movie, I didn't like this movie. The lighting was good, the cinematography was bad.' Hopefully, they're trying to grapple with some of the ideas of the film and what the film means socially, so that it's more about having a conversation about film than as a ... consumer reports review."

Mayeux's concept of an ideal critic sounds great, but it's not always the actual

criticism. Around 50% said they would not be less likely to see a film in theaters, even if it had a 30% score or less on Rotten Tomatoes. Students said it was because they "don't trust critics," or they "think critics are stuck-up."

The idea of a critic's role has been skewed. Sites like Rotten Tomatoes serve as a simple collection of critic's reviews, and are often misinterpreted as the defi-

ANALYSIS

disservice to themselves if they avoid thinking about a film's concepts and ideas, but is this adding to the separation of audience and critic? Are audiences further frustrated by critics for over-analyzing rather than just enjoying a film? Mayeux said that over-analyzing doesn't exist — rather, people often just poorly analyze a film, but many audiences don't want to analyze a film at all. They're watching the film to be entertained.

"[Film critic Roger Ebert] had kind of a floating scale," Clark said. "He measured films by what they were attempting to be, so if they were attempting to be a Marvel film that was just pure entertainment, that's what he would measure it by. If you had another film that was trying to say something important or significant, then he would measure it by kind of a different standard."

Clark said it can be both. He believes that a critic should judge not by his or her own standards, but by the standards the filmmaker sets up for themselves. Clark poses the question: "Is the film accomplishing what it sets out to accomplish?"

If "Transformers" is trying to be robots fighting robots in an entertainment blockbuster, is it successful in that endeavor? Many critics would say no, but were those critics

judging the film by the scale of what it was trying to accomplish, or were they disliking it because it wasn't "artistic" or "significant" enough for them?

Either way, none of those negative reactions from critics stopped the "Transformers" film series from being one of the highest grossing film series of all time, at \$4.8 billion over the course of six films.

So what happened? Were the critical reactions of the films completely overlooked? Do critical reviews have any impact at all on the box office of a film? In fact, the highest-reviewed film in the entire series ended up with the lowest grossing performance of them all. So do audiences care at all about reviews or do they really just want to see mind-numbing action with no real plot?

Mayeux poses that the critical reviews of a film may affect the opening weekend box office, but after that, a film performs based on word-of-mouth, meaning it only remains popular if everyone who watches a film then goes out and tells other people to watch the film.

This is certainly true with 2009's "Avatar." The film did quite well at the box office in its opening weekend, but the only reason it ended up becoming the highest grossing film of all time is because of word-of-mouth. It remained

the highest grossing film of the week for seven weeks in a row, a feat that less than a handful of films have ever accomplished.

Film critics may be powerful, but word-of-mouth is a force to be reckoned with.

Despite all this though, critics survive. Both audience reviewers and professional reviewers thrive in the modern world of media and online discussions. But for the most part, these two sides remain separate, having in-depth discussions, but not always with each other.

Both sides have a little bit to learn from each other. Maybe general audiences could come to appreciate critics for being the well-meaning opinionated people they often are, and maybe film critics could be more clear in not trying to be authoritative.

General audiences could take a moment to think about what a film is trying to say, and, maybe once in a while, a film critic could sit down and just enjoy a film about giant sharks.

Hunter Johnson is a sophomore theatre major and an arts and entertainment writer for Cedars. He spends his time acting on stage, reading and watching Star Wars and occasionally doing homework.



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BLOGS AND PODCASTS

A Muggle Meddling in Magic



Photo by Scott Huck

Journalism professor Jeff Gilbert runs a blog writing his thoughts about each chapter of the Harry Potter books. According to the blog, he “Knew little about the Harry Potter series of books by J.K. Rowling, only what he had heard here and there at home. In 2010, he took up his daughters’ challenge to spend his first free summer as a professor reading and commenting on the series. Well, he got pretty far that summer but the rest of life slowed him down. He’s still working on it and looks forward to the day he finishes.”

The blog can be found at meddling-in-magic.blogspot.com

Fill in the Blank



Photo by Scott Huck

English professor Isaac Mayeux hosts The Fill in the Blank podcast, which seeks to understand professors’ views so students can know how to tailor their writing. “This is a show about gaps: Gaps between students and professors, gaps between writers and readers and even gaps between writers and their own writing,” Mayeux says in one of the podcasts. The purpose of the show is to either bridge those gaps or simply understand and accept them.

In the podcast, Mayeux interviews professors and other visiting writers. One of his goals is to show professors on a more relatable level.

Episodes can be found at digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/fill_in_the_blank

Bereans at the Gate

29 MAR 2019 **Weekly Sage #21: Francois Rabelais**
STANLEY SCHWARTZ
The Weekly Sage hopes to regularly bring brief profiles of key contributors to thought and faith before a Christian audience for historical education and awareness of valuable resources. Francois Rabelais "Summarily exposing to you about this year what I've been able to extract from the authors in the field, Arab and Latin, we shall begin [...]"

29 MAR 2019 **Love your Enemies—a critical reflection**
JEFF HAYMOND
Dr. Smith once again showed why he is the leading Berean light with his recent series on loving your enemies—how do we engage in the public sphere while honoring Christ? As usual, he is hitting the key question which Christians should be wrestling with. His honest reflection is one that challenges and inspires us to [...]"

28 MAR 2019 **The Bullington Diatribe Chronicles – Vol. 3**
MATTHEW BEAL
The Bullington Diatribe Chronicles will run occasionally for the amusement of some, the facepalming of many others, and the inconvenience of all. The following is satire...obviously. The Mueller report landed with a splash over the weekend causing widespread frenzy in the hallowed halls of MSNBC and general relief for the rest of the country. Rep. [...]"

26 MAR 2019 **Mueller Reportageddon: Bereans VLOG**
MARK CALEB SMITH
The Bereans discuss the Mueller Report and its ramifications in their latest video blog.

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Feb 11, 2019 | USA Today
Singers use fashion to make political statement on Grammys red carpet
Feb 11, 2019 | USA Today

Five Cedarville professors write for blog about politics, economics and theology.

“We are Christian professors who thought it might be a good idea to start a blog. Boy, aren’t we hip? ... The blog is dedicated to exploring matters of politics, economics, history, law, and culture from a distinctly Christian perspective, though we will not always pretend this is the case. We all care passionately about an appropriate use of Christianity in general, and biblical teaching in particular, in understanding and commenting upon the times in which we find ourselves.”

The blog can be found at bereansatthegate.com