It's All About the Data Stupid!

Posted by Martin Fairclough On 03/23/2018

"Internet pioneers Lawrence Roberts, Robert Kahn, Vinton Cerf and Tim Berners-Lee"

Leonardtown, MD - Those who remember President Clinton's presidential mantra "its the economy stupid" that was posted on the walls of campaign headquarters in 1992 know it was the theme that carried Clinton to the White House---or such has been the conventional wisdom for many years. In January of 1992 President George H.W. Bush was sky high in the polls north of 80 percent. He lost the presidential election that November. So much for polls!

It seems the reality, that while the economy is always a factor in Presidential races, a phrase more apt might be "its all about the data stupid." And therein lies the problem. The phrase needs an additional word to have any relevance to our political landscape. It's all about the data when the source of that data is an *authoritative source*. The polls (data) predicted a runaway victory for Hillary Clinton in the last election but it turned out to be a runaway defeat. What was wrong with the data? Was it fake data?

The vision of the Internet was first laid out going back to World War II of a "connected intergalactic network" which over time led to the development of the Internet.

Let's get the obvious joke out of the way---It wasn't Al Gore who invented the Internet and the Internet does not seem to be the issue. The Web is the game changer, that came to us courtesy of Tim Berners-Lee. The Web is relatively young---Berners-Lee created it in 1990. But in that short time it has become one of the most popular ways to interact with the Internet---so much so that some people mistakenly believe the Web is the same thing as the Internet.

As the awesome power of the Web becomes apparent, it is changing the way we view the world, interpersonal relationships, the way we think, the protocols of life most baby boomers understood, and adhered to, are being changed in a fundamental way.

As the technology matured, The web became for those with access to it like the little blanket that your grandchild carries around at all times, a safe haven. Got a question, Google it. It also became a powerful propaganda weapon: Whether one wants to sell a product, radicalize disturbed minds, win or lose elections, the list goes on.

Machine learning and artificial intelligence are impacting the limits of human intelligence, the day that it will surpass human intelligence is known as the singularity.

The technological singularity (also, simply, the singularity is the hypothesis that the invention of artificial superintelligence (ASI) will abruptly trigger runaway technological growth, resulting in unfathomable changes to human civilization. According to this hypothesis, an upgradable intelligent agent (such as a computer running software-based artificial general intelligence) would enter a "runaway reaction" of self-improvement cycles, with each new and more intelligent generation appearing more and more rapidly, causing an intelligence explosion and resulting in a powerful superintelligence that would, qualitatively, far surpass all human intelligence. Yikes!! It may even lead to the creation of behemoth titan companies, such as Apple, Face book, Google etc.

Folks predicted back in 2012 that the singularity would be upon us around 2040. (It might have landed two decades earlier).

Early adopters of the power of the web are not waiting around. Whether it is ISIS bringing barbarism into our living rooms, or "news' that can be manipulated it would seem we are pretty much screwed. We have seen how manipulating minds via the Web, is sorta-kinda like propaganda a la Herman Goebbels or Tokyo Rose.

As the president of one of the technology titans is being called to testify in Congress to convince us all that the data is protected and will not be used for nefarious purposes, it would seem that this is a day late and a dollar short. Pandora's Box has been opened and the genie on the loose is as powerful as nuclear weapons.

It would seem more appropriate to coin a different phrase, which captures how human nature is morphing and voting: "It is a combination of data (fake or real), and the 24/7 news cycle (fake or real), stupid"

Run away super smart machines pose greater threats to us all if the providence of the data being used is not authoritative and the truth is, *we have no way of checking it out.*

So What are the options? Censor the news, bring back printing presses, ban computers, put a control on the Internet, implement a rating/access (with proof -not fake) to the Web.

Perhaps, we all take on the cause the memorialized words of Alfred E. Newman - Quid Me Anxious Sum"

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