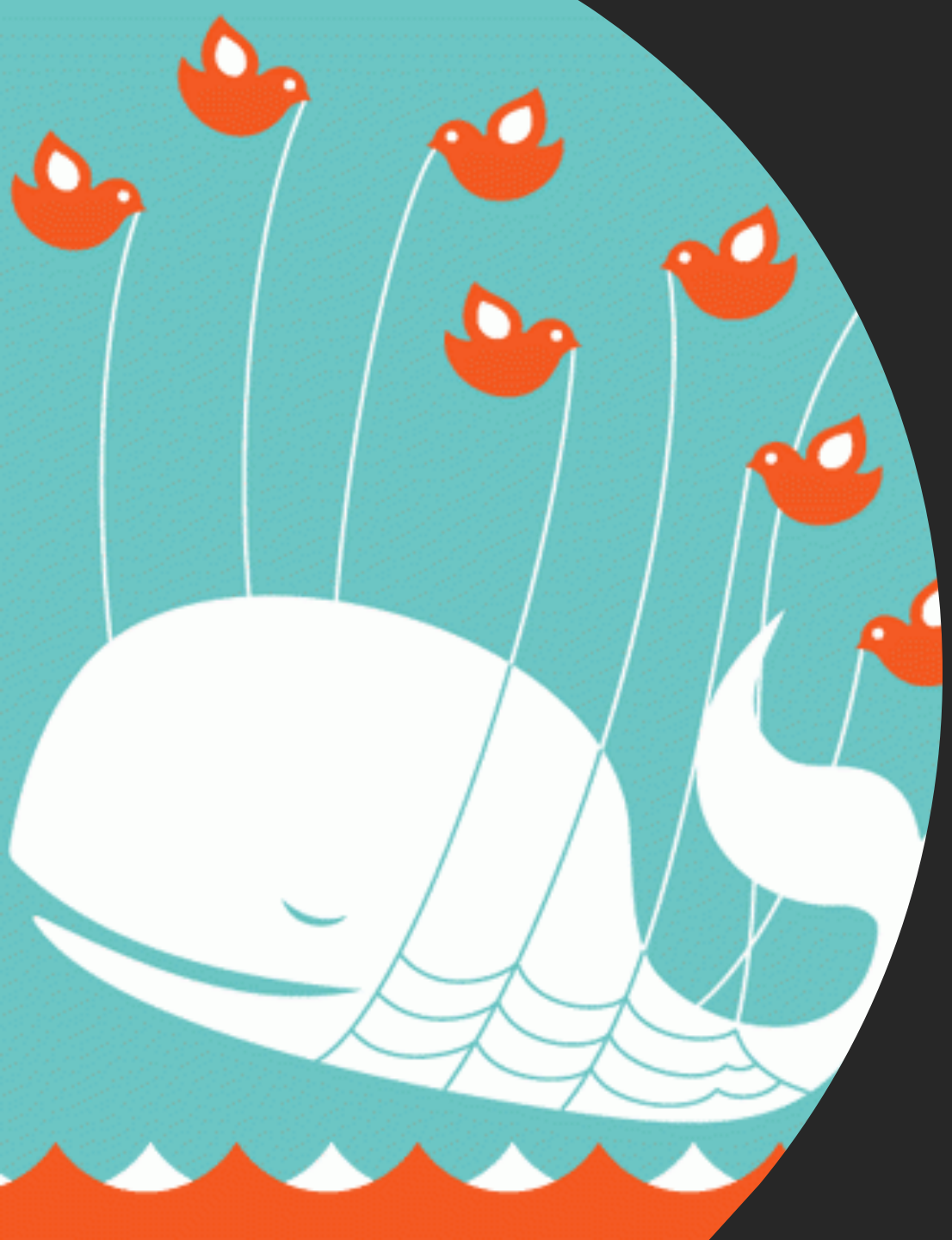

Who Watches the Birdwatchers?

Creating a Rogue Archive of Twitter's Ongoing Collapse

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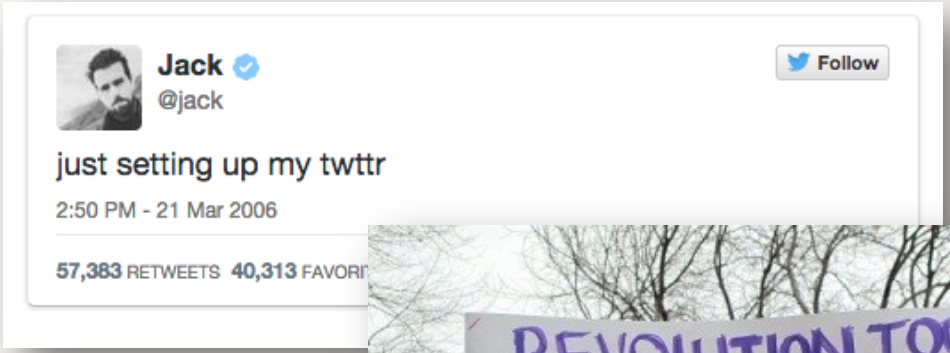
@bpettis@benpettis.ninja

~~Twitter~~ X is a dying platform

- Assessing dying platforms can help us to imagine and establish better futures
- We cannot rely on a platform alone to document its own histories.
- Archiving projects cannot save *everything* but preserving "platform metacommentary" can be valuable

Little History of Twitter

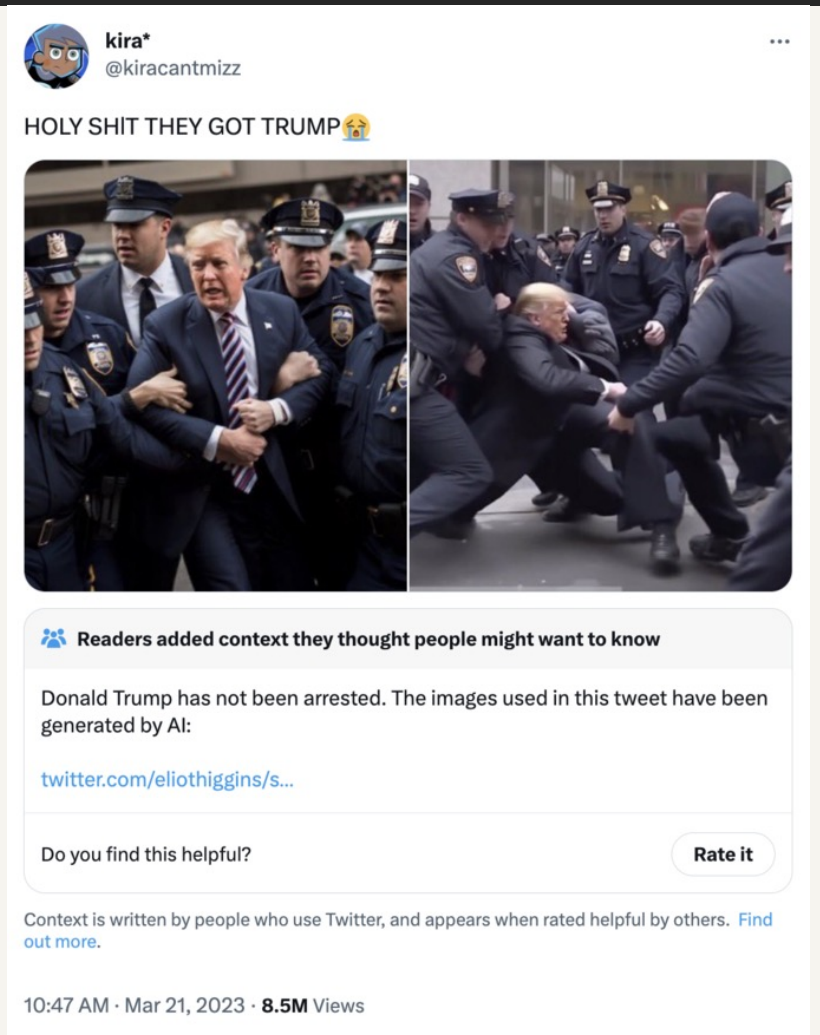


Archiving Twitter

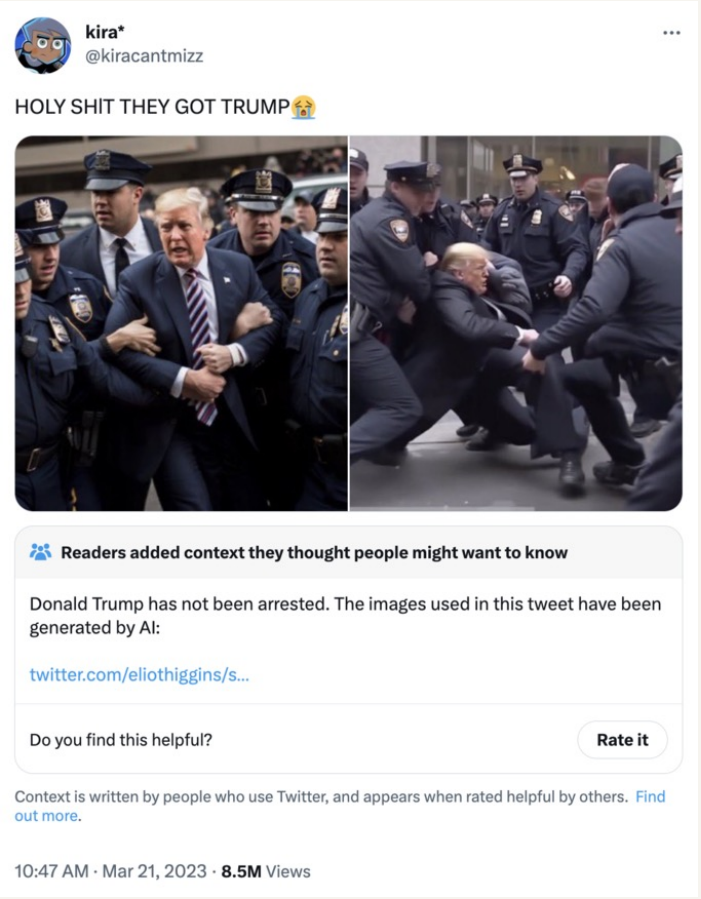
- Access to Twitter data has always been volatile
- Rogue Archives (De Kosnik 2016) can highlight (some) user perspectives
- “Web archiving practices constrain how we will come to know and understand dead and dying platforms in future.” (Ogden 2021)

Birdwatch / Community Notes

- Crowdsourced fact-checking program
- Musk renamed to “Community Notes”
- Metacommentary on how (some) users understand the platform



Birdwatch / Community Notes



Birdwatch Note

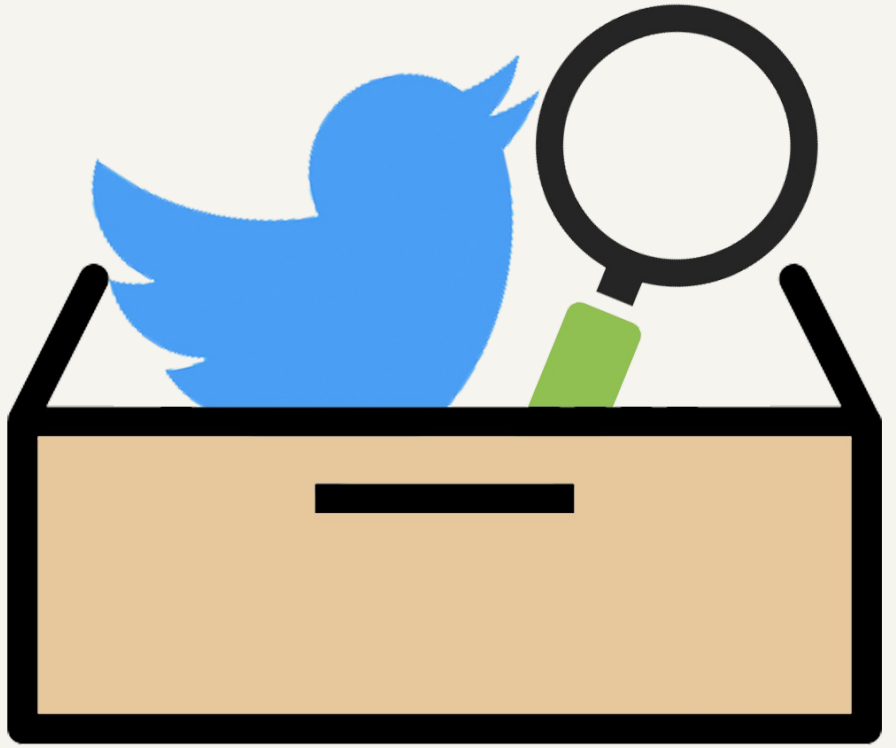
2022-10-27 21:20:37 UTC - **NOT_MISLEADING**

Dear fellow birdwatchers. Goodbye. I'm sure this program will be shut down shortly. It never worked. Yours truly.

Written by BB627376C1CA1EF733556BD4297F265D
Participant Details

birdwatcharchive.org

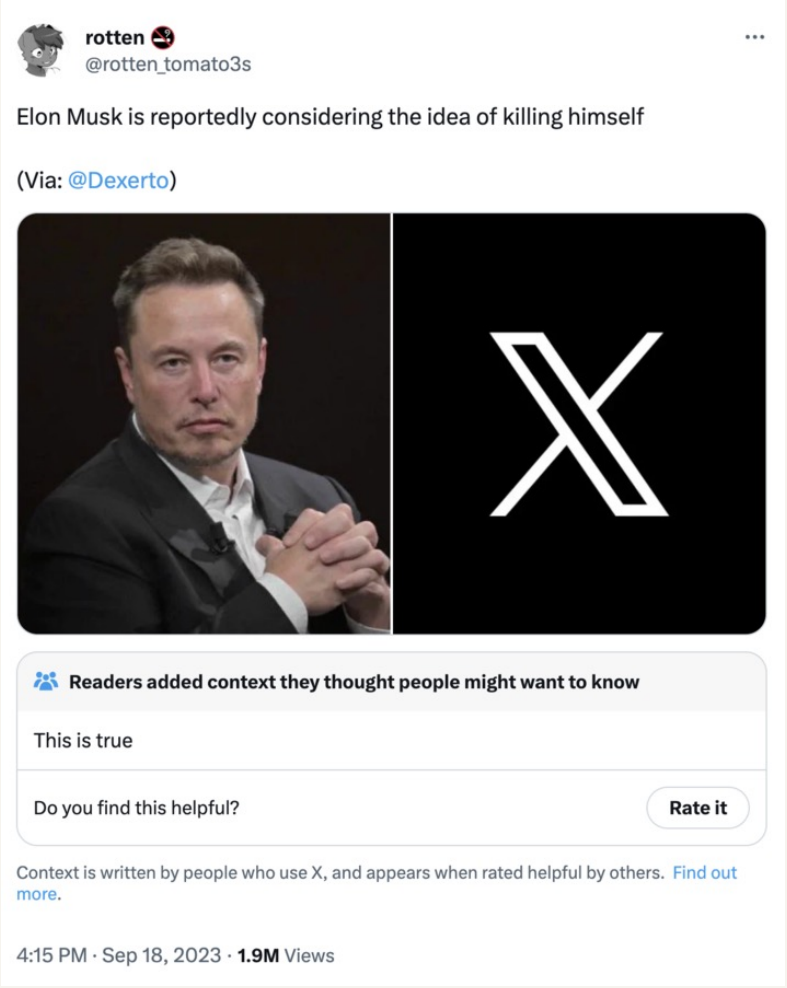
- Twitter publishes Birdwatch data, but not in a highly usable format
- There is no guarantee that Twitter will continue to host these files
- My web app copies the files and enables basic searching, filtering, and correlations

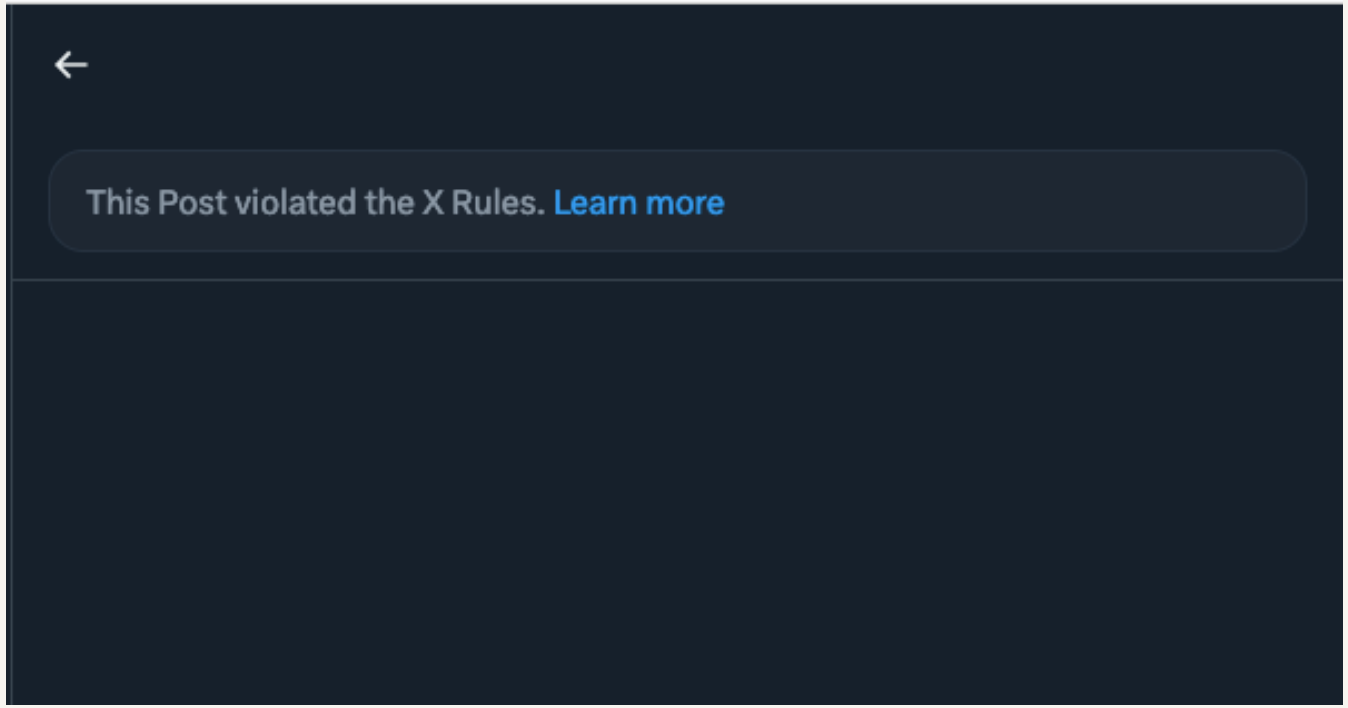


Ethics of a Rogue Archive

- Data is released publicly
- Birdwatch is promoted as a service *for* the rest of Twitter
- User IDs are anonymized – only Twitter could re-identify to @usernames

Correlating Birdwatch Data





Correlating Birdwatch Data

Birdwatch Note

2023-09-19 12:50:42 UTC - **MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING**

This is true

Written by 02E6C82F8B8FAEC4642D7132E6A93921047F875462C504327BE467C5BDA7CFB1
Participant Details

Birdwatch Note Rating

2023-09-19 17:30:22 UTC - **HELPFUL**

Rated by Participant: 374976E4FBF41F2A0D739A182B7A09EF6C9656D7EF0430CE28C19DEF96E65484
Participant Details

Original Note:

This is true

All Note Details

Participant Details

Participantid: 02E6C82F8B8FAEC4642D7132E6A93921047F875462C504327BE467C5BDA7CFB1

created_at: 2023-08-11 23:30:35 UTC

updated_at: 2023-08-11 23:30:35 UTC

created_at and updated_at reflect when the information was ingested into the Birdwatch databa
created. See Enrollment Statuses for that information.

Notes Written

Note ID	Timestamp	Details
1686532859060682753	2023-08-02 00:22:22 UTC	Details
1693345001177051410	2023-08-20 19:31:23 UTC	Details
1699148179013247429	2023-09-05 19:51:09 UTC	Details
1704115800645271713	2023-09-19 12:50:42 UTC	Details
1706283293316894839	2023-09-25 12:23:32 UTC	Details
1710446655248466316	2023-10-07 00:07:15 UTC	Details
1704479892882989261	2023-09-20 12:57:28 UTC	Details

Birdwatch Note

2023-09-25 12:23:32 UTC - **MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING**

As much as I'd like this to be true, it doesn't work like that. Cow's milk presents no significant boost in estrogen levels. Sorry to be a buzzkill. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-dairy-research/article/oestrogens-in-milk-and-breast-cancer-a-cause-for-concernor-not/3C7E68061D8CB73DFC5E6AF879AF3CA0?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=bookmark

Written by 02E6C82F8B8FAEC4642D7132E6A93921047F875462C504327BE467C5BDA7CFB1
Participant Details

Correlating Birdwatch Data

Birdwatch Note

2023-09-20 05:28:19 UTC - **NOT_MISLEADING**

Y'all a bunch of milk drinkers

Written by 260E3BA8C8B25E242C3C276A829B91C74BE116B2F039190BF92E284F53C203A6
Participant Details

Birdwatch Note

2023-09-19 21:46:04 UTC - **NOT_MISLEADING**

TRUE: THIS POST HAS BEEN FACT-CHECKED BY REAL AMERICAN PATRIOTS 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸

Written by 133E1CCD2C408EA752D8FC96AA52A35B6E70A29BF8C229BE942D6F6E9A3F5648
Participant Details

Birdwatch Note

2023-09-20 23:51:17 UTC - **NOT_MISLEADING**

He's going to go through with it. Source: my uncle works for SpaceX

Written by D954FA2C1779A9C5A3A61D441690F0F9E77E8ECC7F42887B746C023138F1EC5A
Participant Details

2023-09-19 17:01:30 UTC - M

unfortunately this is not true

Written by 3928E2369F2E2D068A6E0BA9C0BB705F5862250AB06D5653FE872C41A01308F9
Participant Details

Birdwatch Note

2023-09-20 01:16:04 UTC - **NOT_MISLEADING**

I mean you can't prove that he never considered it

Written by 6EC84EC3D9F0FBAB860D7CCED58800D23296DFC1BAC3D9F365E7D38A32
Participant Details

NNN Little bros... Elon Musk isn't gonna fuck you. Maybe if you were a non-consenting flight attendant in 2016, you'd have shot! Source: https://www.businessinsider.com/spacex-paid-250000-to-a-flight-attendant-who-accused-elon-musk-of-sexual-misconduct-2022-5?amp But this is so obviously satirical, from the wording to the structure. If you read the guidelines you'd know that satire isn't note-worthy.

Written by E03D09C85A049783D5D2CCD0143A34DFDC6C3FCE7B80EB8CC6E44466E877B5C9
Participant Details

Birdwatch Note

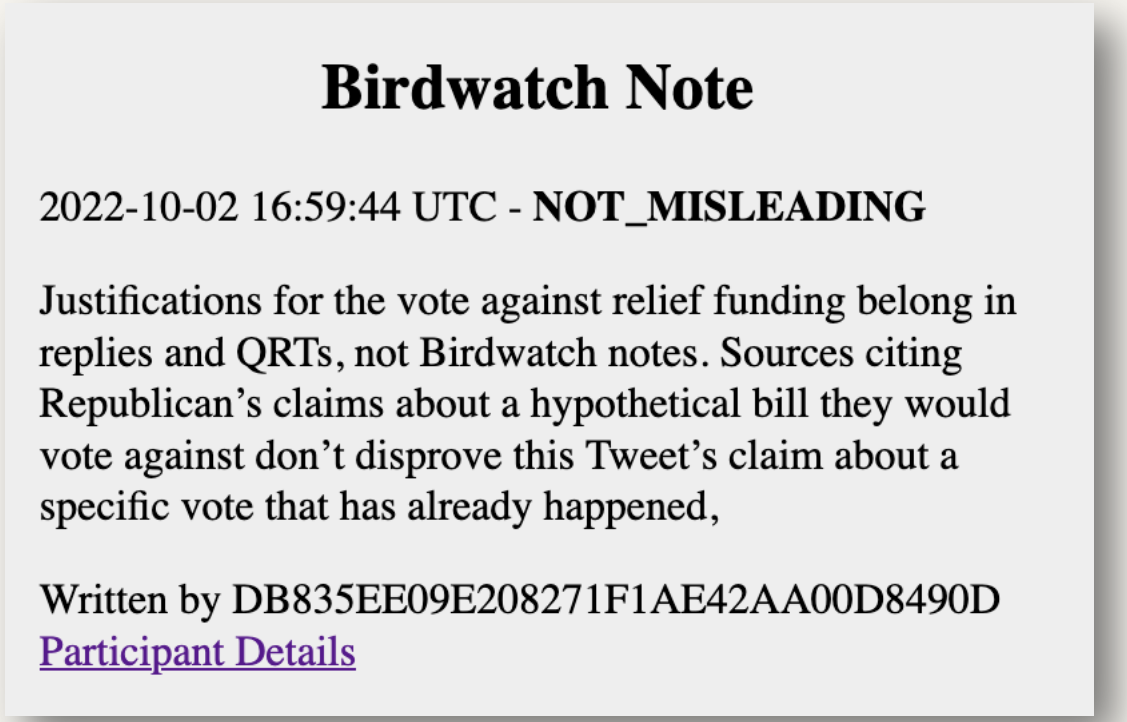
2023-09-20 12:40:42 UTC - **MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING**

And we support him!

Written by 77C24F049783A371AA07570BA640E3E88DC8505CD137E844B1B3DF31F742AFC6
Participant Details

Platform Metacommentary

- Birdwatch notes are evidence of how *some* users perceive the platform
- Birdwatch users debate (in the notes) what the purpose of fact-checking even is
- This metacommentary is valuable for understanding a rapidly devolving platform



Birdwatch Note

2022-10-02 16:59:44 UTC - **NOT_MISLEADING**

Justifications for the vote against relief funding belong in replies and QRTs, not Birdwatch notes. Sources citing Republican's claims about a hypothetical bill they would vote against don't disprove this Tweet's claim about a specific vote that has already happened,

Written by DB835EE09E208271F1AE42AA00D8490D
Participant Details

Birdwatch Notes (Oct 1 – Oct 30 2022)

Your search returned 17 results.

Note ID	Note Created	classification		
1585979460351819776	2022-10-28 12:59:04 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1585745524010926081	2022-10-27 21:29:29 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1585743291584335873	2022-10-27 21:20:37 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1585535414470733824	2022-10-27 07:34:35 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1581461613525114880	2022-10-16 01:46:45 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1580265304235864065	2022-10-12 18:33:03 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1580145800969355264	2022-10-12 10:38:11 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1579554883321139228	2022-10-10 19:30:05 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1578893043859587072	2022-10-08 23:40:10 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1578843254224822274	2022-10-08 20:22:19 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1578230458948763650	2022-10-07 03:47:18 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1578122553444470784	2022-10-06 20:38:31 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1578037063059841030	2022-10-06 14:58:49 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1577945776860418049	2022-10-06 08:56:04 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1577134376189628416	2022-10-04 03:11:51 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1576934640643936256	2022-10-03 13:58:11 UTC	MISINFORMED_OR_POTENTIALLY_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details
1576617941579210752	2022-10-02 16:59:44 UTC	NOT_MISLEADING	Original Tweet	Note Details

Birdwatch Notes (Oct 1 – Oct 30 2022)

- “Birdwatch has been out a while”
- “Birdwatch has expanded concurrently with Twitter's takeover by Elon Musk”
- “Fact checking content has nothing to do with management or elons future acquisition of the company”

Birdwatch Notes (Oct 1 – Oct 30 2022)

- “Justifications for the vote against relief funding belong in replies and QRTs, not Birdwatch notes.”
- “Other Birdwatches need major mental health help”
- “Dear fellow birdwatchers. Goodbye. I'm sure this program will be shut down shortly. It never worked. Yours truly.”
- “However, it is not clear whether it is still permissible to make fun of Elon Musk, e.g., for being legally compelled to pay an inflated price for an ungovernable hellsite. We'll see!”

Platform Metacommentary

- Platform metacommentary includes the ways that some people use a platform to talk ***about*** that same platform.
- In the case of Birdwatch, is limited to a subset of *all* users. Can provide indications of what pieces of content are receiving increased circulation and scrutiny.
- Can offer details about how a platform is understood by its users

Challenges: Volume

- Twitter produces a *lot* of data
- Birdwatch activity is significantly lower, but still large

Challenges: Access to Technology

```
# Use those dates to create a list of URLs to then download
for target_date in dates_list:
    url_list[target_date] = {'notes': '', 'ratings': '', 'noteStatusHistory': '', 'userEnrollmentStatus': ''}
    url_list[target_date]['notes'] = ('https://ton.twimg.com/birdwatch-public-data/' + target_date + '/notes/notes-00000.tsv')
    url_list[target_date]['ratings'] = ('https://ton.twimg.com/birdwatch-public-data/' + target_date + '/noteRatings/ratings-00000.ts
    url_list[target_date]['noteStatusHistory'] = ('https://ton.twimg.com/birdwatch-public-data/' + target_date + '/noteStatusHistory/
    url_list[target_date]['userEnrollmentStatus'] = ('https://ton.twimg.com/birdwatch-public-data/' + target_date + '/userEnrollment/

for target in url_list:
    # download notes
    data = query_url(url_list[target]['notes'])
    destination_file = target + '/notes.tsv'
    if isinstance(data, bytes):
        print(f'Looks like the download worked! Now saving {destination_file} to Google Cloud Storage')
        upload_blob(data, destination_file)
    else:
        print('seems something went wrong. check above for error messages')
```

```
class Note < ApplicationRecord
    has_many :ratings, foreign_key: "noteId"
    has_many :StatusHistories, foreign_key: "noteId"
    belongs_to :participant, foreign_key: "noteAuthorParticipantId"


    ransacker :createdAtMillis, type: :date do
        Arel.sql('TO_TIMESTAMP("createdAtMillis" / 1000)')
    end
```

Challenges: Reliance on Platforms

Download data

Community Notes is built on data transparency

All Community Notes data are published here daily, so people have free access to analyze it, identify problems, and spot opportunities to make Community Notes better. We can't wait to learn with you.

Learn how to use and analyze Community Notes data in our guide.

Notes data

File no. 1 of 1

Ratings data

File no. 1 of 2

File no. 2 of 2

Note status history data

File no. 1 of 1

User enrollment status data

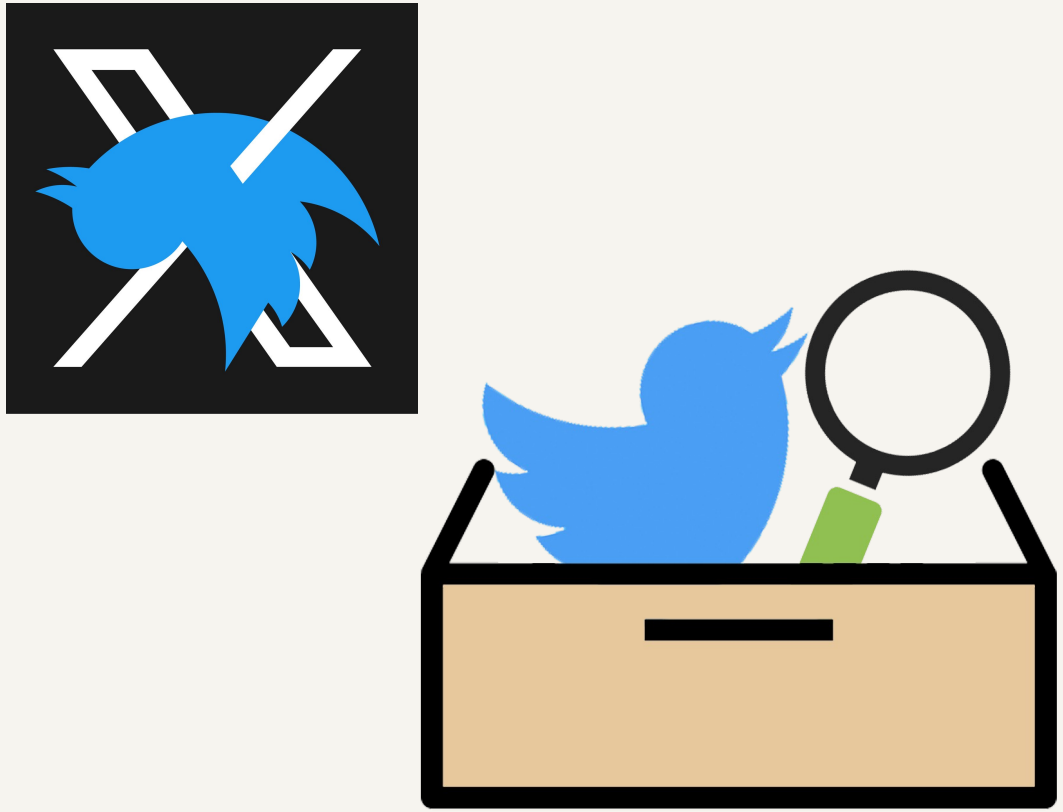
File no. 1 of 1

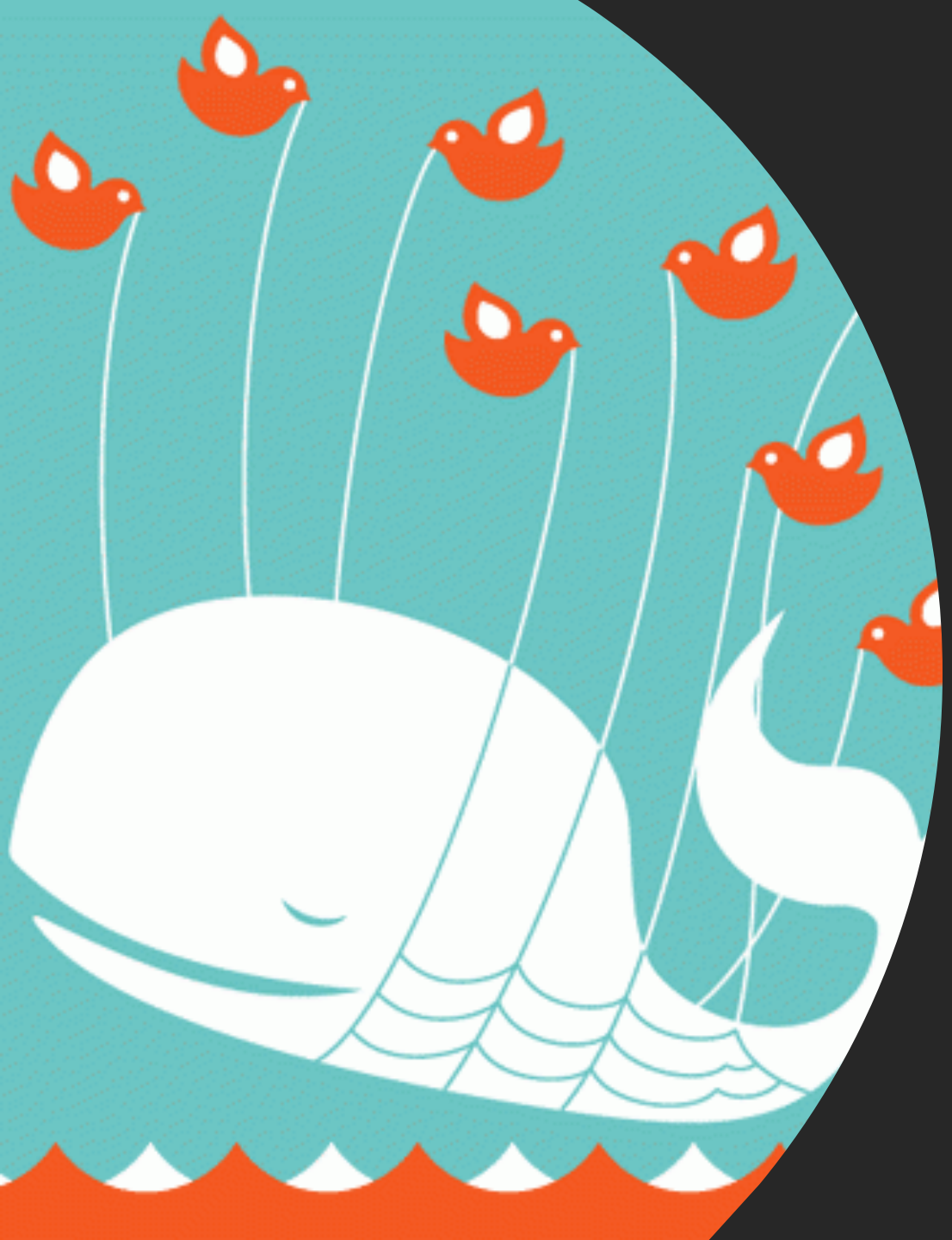
Data includes contributions up until 7:33 PM · Oct 8, 2023

Your use of the datasets is governed by the X Developer Agreement and Policy. By clicking on the Download icon, you agree to the X Developer Agreement and Policy.

Conclusions

- Assessing dying platforms can help us to imagine and establish better futures
- We cannot rely on a platform alone to document its own histories.
- Platform metacommentary is valuable to preserve





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