



← Our Work

Clemson University Creates a Powerful Tool Designed to Teach Thoughtful Humans How to Spot Internet Trolls

Clemson University researchers Darren Linvill and Patrick Warren have spent the past few years uncovering suspicious social media accounts that have been used to spread disinformation. The university professors identified more than 300 tweets from nearly 30 suspicious accounts that identify and promote videos of racially

sensitive incidents. Many of the posts are designed to create distrust and further divide Americans on difficult racial, health, and economic issues. Their research [has been widely reported](#) and has resulted in the removal of Russian-linked accounts from Twitter and other social media outlets. In the spring of 2020, Interactive Knowledge was chosen to design and produce an online quiz that uncovers interesting facts about social media posts that have the sole purpose of spreading disinformation. This interactive quiz, titled [Spot the Troll](#), uses real social media content to test the users' ability to discern legitimate accounts from Internet trolls.



[Spot the Troll](#) is available for public use and will be included as an activity for several Clemson University College of Business courses. The website presents a series of eight actual social media accounts.

The user is asked to decide whether the account profile is authentic or a fictional profile that has been created by Russians or others in order to post misleading and divisive information. Once the user decides whether the account is real or fake, feedback is provided along with detailed information that shows ways to better detect the authenticity of a social media account. The extensive research completed at Clemson University's Media Forensics Hub has uncovered trends and facts that are shared in the feedback section for each of the eight accounts. The goal of this site is to disseminate the research in a format that is easily accessible to anyone who uses social media and wants to slow down the spread of false and misleading information.

Key Website Features

Real Content— Each of the accounts and posts that are used in Spot the Troll Quiz, both the genuine accounts and the professional trolls, are taken directly from Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Nothing is changed and all posts appear as they did (or still do) online. Clemson University researchers are still actively working to identify disinformation as it appears in social media accounts. Trolls and bots are getting more sophisticated than they were during the 2016 election, so finding the clues that can help identify false information is more important than ever.



Harmony Anderson

@HarmonyAnders

The college girl who managed to stay conservative [#prolife](#) [#pro2A](#) [#AmericaFirst](#)
This is my 2nd account where I share my political and social views

Ankeny, Iowa

Joined September 2019

3162 Following 4216 Followers

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



Harmony Anderson
@HarmonyAnders



Pennsylvania voter rolls near Pittsburgh are full of inaccuracies:

—1,583 dead people registered to vote

—7,500 flagged as duplicate voters

—Nearly 50 born in the 1800s 2020 runs through Pennsylvania RT for national voter ID NOW!

  Trump2020

Online Quiz With Personalized Results— The Spot the Troll Quiz will test users' perception of the authenticity of various social media accounts. Eight profiles are presented, along with a sampling of actual posts from that account. Users decide if the person is real or not, submit their decision, and are instantly provided with feedback. Answers identify the account owner's background and credibility, along with supporting signs that users can use to judge the veracity of other social media accounts. A final score is delivered along with social media sharing options for Facebook and Twitter.

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Share Your Result



You have room to improve
**We recommend you check out our
“Resources” page.**

The vast majority of social media accounts you will engage with online are real people voicing genuine opinions. Be wary, however, because professional trolls do exist and they aren't necessarily the accounts you may think they are. Many professional trolls want to be your friend; they want to pull you in a new and sometimes divisive direction. Be wary of who you friend online and which messages you decide to repost. On social media, just like in real life, not all strangers have your best interest at heart.

[Resources: Learn More »](#)

[About the project »](#)

[Reset Quiz »](#)

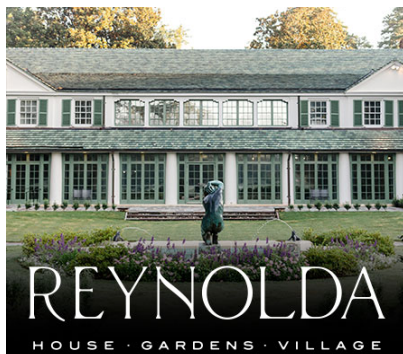
Resources— An extensive resource section on the website includes a list of organizations that are dedicated to fighting disinformation and twenty articles providing in-depth research on Russian trolls and online disinformation tactics. The resource section is also organized to expand the feedback on each of the eight profiles used in the quiz. Research on the specific tactics or posts employed by the fake accounts are documented by articles from the New York Times, NPR, and other respected news sources.

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