

The Markup

THEMARKUP.ORG

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ONE



Meet The Markup

NABIHA SYED

No doubt about it: We rely on technology. From contactless food delivery to remote schooling to telemedicine, 2020 reminded us all that technology is no longer just an industry; it is the architecture of our reality. But is it the right architecture?

The Markup, a nonprofit investigative news organization, exists to explore that question and to provide answers.

We use technology to investigate technology and how it shapes today's workplaces, social circles, beliefs, cultures, and the functioning of democracy. Our work does double-duty: We create data-driven journalism powered by ambitious tools, and then we put those tools in the hands of those who can use them for change.

One simple principle drives us: The public deserves to understand exactly how technology affects their lives, and what they can do about it. We want our readers to feel a sense of agency, not apathy about the world. We try to lead by example. Instead of lecturing our readers about the importance of privacy, we invest in designing a privacy-protective approach to everything from our tracker-free website to audience measurement and other

custom tools that respect a user's right to privacy. In that way, The Markup is both a response to the profound disruptions in our daily lives and a disruptor itself. We build the world we want to see.

Our first year of publishing—and what a tumultuous one!—yielded impact on all levels. Our investigation into Google's alleged self-dealing

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was cited during a congressional antitrust hearing. Our investigation into the inaccessibility of state coronavirus websites led to critical accessibility updates. Our "Prepare Your Phone for Protests" guide was posted along routes in New York City following the killing of George Floyd. And our investigations into Facebook prompted them to stop allowing advertisers to target 78 million people across the platform whom Facebook had labeled as having an

interest in pseudoscience. And we managed that impact—in federal, state, popular, corporate, and consumer spheres—with a lean team who began working remotely just days after our launch.

We are ramping up at a moment when trust in both journalism and technology has been shaken to its foundation. The challenge is welcome. As you'll see in this report, our work intends to hold both institutions to a higher standard, and push them toward a better version of themselves.

There's one thing we need more than anything else to accomplish that: You. Thank you for reading and for your continued support. This is just the beginning.

All my best,

NABIHA SYED
President
The Markup



A Letter from Our Editor

JULIA ANGWIN

Data is political. Who collects it matters. And their motives matter.

Institutions don't have an incentive to collect data that is not in their interest. That's why it is so hard to find good data on police shootings; law enforcement agencies often don't keep that data, and so journalists have to build databases themselves—including The Washington Post's award-winning Fatal Force database. And that's why we don't have a dataset of how many times Facebook has allowed government officials on its platform to incite violence around the world.

That's why The Markup invests heavily in collecting our own data.

We don't "chase" breaking news the way a surfer chases a wave. We take a scientific approach to our investigations of how society is changing due to Big Tech. Our reporters first develop a working hypothesis and then seek the data they need to test that hypothesis.

The questions we seek to answer are ones that matter to society, such as: Is Facebook allowing hate speech? Is Google giving

its products an advantage in search results? Are landlords using software to assign inaccurate risk scores to potential tenants? Is Amazon selling products that kill people?

Often, the answers to those questions require collecting enormous amounts of data using automation. Unlike most newsrooms, where only a few data journalists operate in service to the rest of the news staff and are swamped with requests, The Markup hires an equal number of traditional reporters and data journalists who collaborate in true partnership.

This is an ambitious experiment in building a new kind of public service newsroom. And it has meant forging a new culture that blends the deliberate, iterative approach of engineering with the gritty gumshoe culture of traditional reporting.

In year one, we proved that this innovative approach to newsmaking is a recipe for investigative success. As you read our first-ever Annual Report, you'll learn about some of the custom forensic tools our team has dreamed up

and built in order to find answers that were previously out of reach. Among them are Blacklight, a privacy inspection tool that allowed us to expose the pervasiveness of third-party trackers across the internet; and Citizen Browser, which allowed us to create a national panel of Facebook users to audit which news and narratives the social media giant's blackbox algorithms amplify and suppress.

We think bringing tech expertise to tech reporting in this way is the future of accountability journalism and a necessary part of understanding how technology is shaping each of our lives. Thank you for being part of it.

JULIA ANGWIN

Founder and
Editor-in-Chief
The Markup



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Our Approach

The Markup stands alone as a nonprofit newsroom focused on investigating how powerful institutions are using technology to reshape society. But it's our independent approach to journalism that makes us stand out.

Bringing Tech Expertise to Tech Reporting

While most newsrooms have raced to figure out how to use technology as a tool to promote and distribute news, it's not uncommon for technology to continue to be an afterthought when it comes to producing journalism itself. For The Markup, however, technology is central to our newsroom. Our team of reporters are trained in traditional news-gathering methods as well as linear regression, machine learning, SQL, and Jupyter Notebook. We hire just as many engineers as journalists, and pair them for almost every investigation we pursue. And we build custom technological tools that not only help us uncover stories that could not be uncovered any other way but that also empower the public to play an active role in understanding how technology affects all of our lives.

Our Privacy Promise to the Public

Many newsrooms rely on technologies expressly built to harvest your personal data in service of marketing and growth. The Markup takes the opposite approach. We don't think we can investigate the complex system of data exploitation while shackled to it. So we've invested heavily in building a website that employs no third-party tracking technology. And we've made a privacy promise to our readers: We collect as little personal information about our readers as possible when they visit our site, and we never monetize that data. While this approach can be expensive and time-consuming, we believe deeply in the idea that journalism that's meant to serve the public cannot simultaneously exploit it.

Journalism for All

Because the journalism we produce serves the public interest, we work hard to make it as accessible as possible. Not only is it not hidden behind a paywall, but we've also intentionally elected to publish our investigations and methodologies under a Creative Commons license. This encourages greater public access to important findings. We also actively seek out partnerships with other media to help reach different audiences. Last year this led to our work being published in The New York Times, The Guardian, CNN.com, Consumer Reports, Gizmodo, The Next Web, and OneZero. In addition, The Texas Observer used source material we shared openly on GitHub and DocumentCloud for one of our investigations as the basis for an original local investigation of its own on the same subject.

Backing Off from On Background

In journalism, “going on background” generally means when a reporter secures information that they’ve agreed won’t be attributed to its source. This can be important in protecting sources who want to share information they believe is in the public’s interest but could put themselves in harm’s way by revealing it. Unfortunately, going on background has too often become a tactic used by corporate spokespeople who would rather not attach their names to troubling policies enacted by their employer. The Markup decided early on that we would not participate in “on background” conversations with company officials. Our reasoning is simple: Anonymity isn’t standard; it’s a privilege that should be born only of necessity. Corporate spokespeople who are paid to provide information simply don’t meet the criteria for being granted anonymity. We believe that this policy can lead to better and more precise responses from spokespeople when they realize that they will have to stand behind what they say.

THE MARKUP METHOD

We pursue stories through an approach rooted in the scientific method. It’s a three-step process:

1

BUILD

We ask questions and collect or build the datasets we need to test our hypotheses.

2

BULLETPROOF

We bulletproof our stories through a rigorous review process, inviting external experts and even the subjects of investigations to challenge our findings.

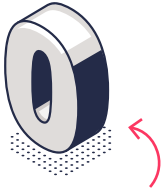
3

SHOW OUR WORK

We share our research methods by publishing our datasets and our code. And we explain our approach in detailed methodological write-ups, inviting experts and the broader public alike to understand our methodology, interrogate our conclusions, and engage in a dialogue about the technologies that shape our lives.

YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS

By The Numbers



The number of third-party trackers to which we've exposed our readers.



87% of popular websites on the internet load third-party tracking technology, as uncovered by an investigation published by The Markup.

6 The Google Search ranking for our investigation into how Google's ad portal equated the term "Black Girls" with pornography when people searched for "porn."

549

Public records requests filed by our team over the course of our first year of reporting.

+15k

Number of subscribers to The Markup's weekly newsletter, "**HELLO WORLD.**"

\$57k

spent incurring a "Privacy Tax" by building bespoke privacy tools in order to avoid using off-the-shelf software that would track our readers.

12k

of the most trafficked websites on the internet that we determined were using "session recording"—technology that monitors and records a person's behavior on a webpage, including scrolls and mouse movements.



Amicus brief filed in the Supreme Court arguing that an overly

broad reading of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act flouts First Amendment protections for newsgathering and could endanger journalists' ability to source news.



1,000 LINES OF CODE WRITTEN AND REWRITTEN TO BUILD 68 CUSTOM PARSERS TO ANALYZE GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS PAGES.

1,917 *panelists participating in The Citizen Browser Project—a national panel of Facebook users we built to audit which news and narratives the social media giant’s blackbox algorithms amplify and suppress.*

800 schools in Florida for which we obtained & analyzed data to uncover disparities in remote learning.

+15k

The number of Google searches we analyzed in our investigation on how the search engine advantages itself by favoring its products in search results.

17k

Signatures garnered on an online petition calling on Facebook to disable microtargeting features, catalyzed by our story on pseudoscience.

+8k

Downloads of our custom “Simple Search” browser extension for Firefox and Chrome.



SIXTY-SIX

Listings for doping drugs that were taken down by Amazon after The Markup reported their sale on the platform.

963,665

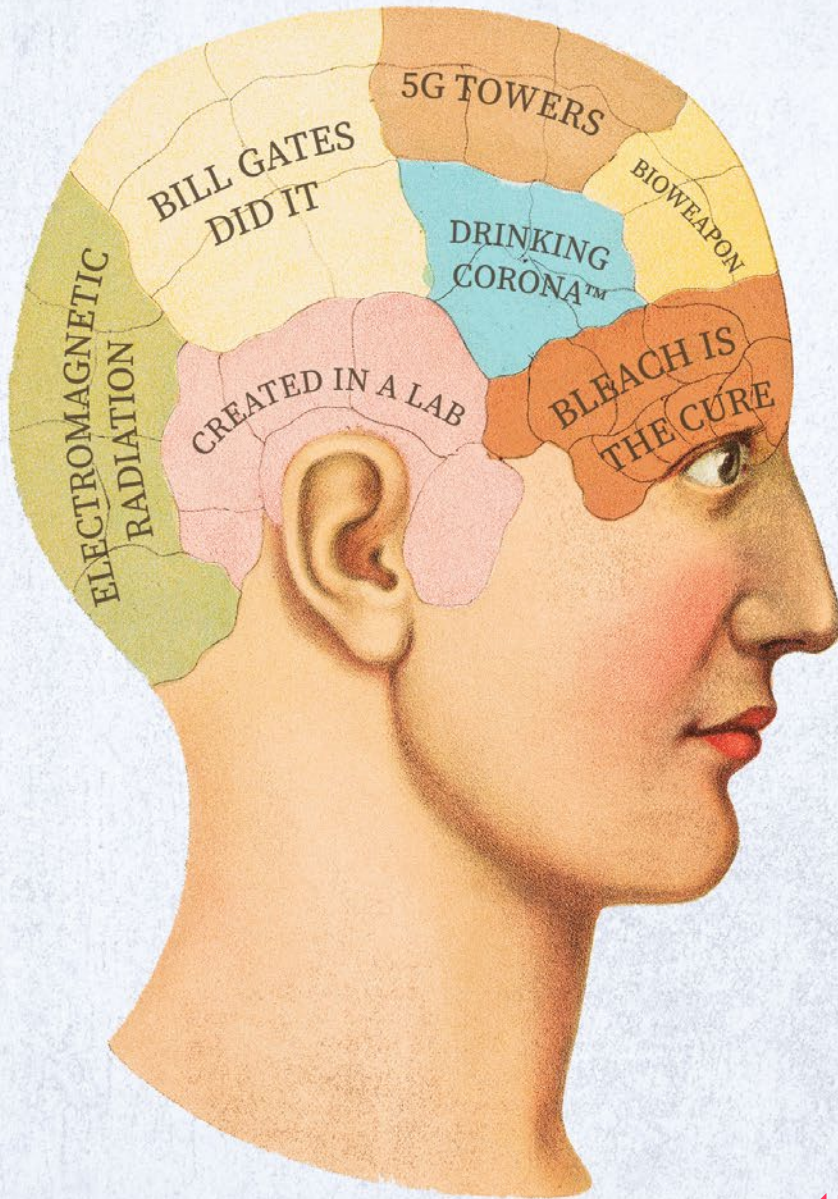
Scan requests by the public using Blacklight, our custom privacy inspection tool built to expose the pervasiveness of third-party trackers across the web.



States to which our team sent public records requests for information during an comprehensive investigation into coronavirus testing algorithms.

Journalism plays an essential role in keeping the public well-informed, strengthening democracy, and fostering a healthy society. As an independent nonprofit newsroom focused on uncovering how powerful institutions' use of technology is affecting society,

**The Markup's
primary
measure of
success is
real-world
impact.**



◀ Facebook was allowing advertisers to profit from ads targeting people interested in “pseudoscience.” When we inquired about the category for our investigation, Facebook immediately shut it down.

Journalism's Check on Big Tech

As the global pandemic of 2020 and the historic economic downturn that accompanied it changed the world in ways big and small, Big Tech only changed one way: It got much bigger. Amazon added hundreds of thousands of new employees. Facebook's market capitalization doubled. And Google's growing dominance led the U.S. Department of Justice to file an antitrust lawsuit against the company for the first time.

As these internet giants amassed even greater power, journalism shouldered more weight as an honest check on that power. And The Markup was at the ready with vital, data-driven investigative reporting. Here are some of the changes and impact spurred by our most significant investigations into Big Tech during our first year.

Exposing Google's Monopolistic Behavior

In July, investigative reporter Adrienne Jeffries and investigative data reporter Leon Yin published a months-long investigation exploring how Google advantages itself in search results. We built custom software to scrape the results for more than 15,000 recent popular queries and developed a novel technique that was inspired by biology lab work to analyze the elements on the search result pages. Our analysis found that Google devoted 41 percent of the first page of search results on mobile devices, and 63 percent of the coveted first screen on iPhoneX to its own properties and what it calls "direct answers," which are populated with information copied from other sources, sometimes without their knowledge or consent. These findings were cited during the questioning of Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai at a historic hearing of the House of Representatives' antitrust subcommittee as evidence that Google was engaging in monopolistic behavior. The subcommittee chair said our story showed that "Google is increasingly a walled garden which keeps users on Google's sites, even if Google doesn't have the most relevant information. And it's economically catastrophic for other companies online." The investi-

gation was cited in the committee's report, which called for broad action. And the facts we uncovered in this and a subsequent investigation were cited as evidence in three antitrust lawsuits filed against Google in 2020 by various state coalitions and the Department of Justice.

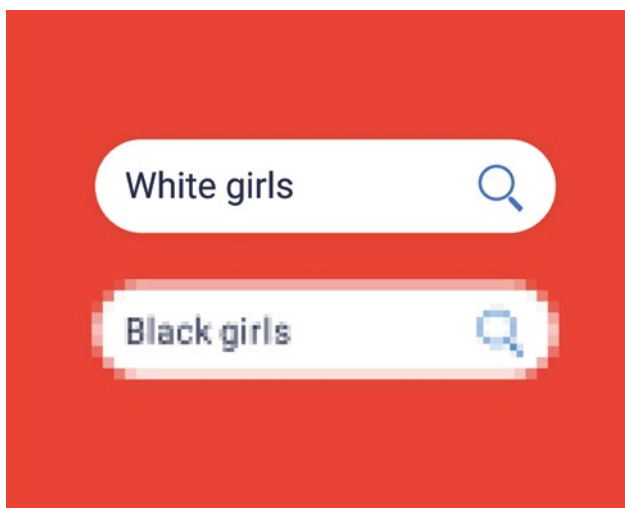
Uncovering Pseudoscience Ads on Facebook

In April, following Facebook's pledge that it would combat misinformation about COVID-19 and how to treat it on its platform, investigative reporter Aaron Sankin found that the social network was allowing advertisers to profit from ads targeting people interested in "pseudoscience." Upon inquiring about the category for our investigation, Facebook immediately shut it down. As a result, advertisers are no longer allowed to target 78 million people across the platform whom Facebook had labeled as having an interest in pseudoscience.

Compelling the Removal of Holocaust Denial Pages on Facebook

In November, The Markup published another investigation by Sankin, this one examining how Holocaust denial groups continued to be active on Facebook and finding that Facebook's algorithms were actively recommending related content. This effectively created a network for pushing anti-Semitic content, breaking the company's promises to ban Holocaust deniers as part of its larger policy prohibiting hate speech. In the weeks following The Markup's story, Facebook quietly removed several of those pages.

The algorithm in Google’s ad portal, Keywords Planner, was returning primarily pornographic results for the search term “Black girls.”



Revealing Dangerous Listings on Amazon

In June, investigative data journalist Jon Keegan and reporter Annie Gilbertson discovered that Amazon was facilitating the sale of potentially deadly and dangerous items the platform claimed it prohibited—some offered for sale by Amazon itself. After examining five categories related to theft, drugs, weapons, spying, and other dangerous goods that Amazon bans from its platform, The Markup found nearly 100

listings that broke the platform’s own rules. Third-party sellers were offering AR-15 parts, injectable drugs, equipment used to make counterfeit drugs, an unproven treatment to fight cancer with electromagnetic frequencies, and other dangerous and illicit items. Some prohibited items were sitting in Amazon’s warehouses, ready to be shipped. After we contacted Amazon for our investigation, the company removed nearly every listing for banned items that we had discovered.

Calling Out Google’s Equating of “Black Girls” with Porn

In July, Sankin and investigative data journalist Leon Yin revealed that the algorithm in Google’s ad portal, Keywords Planner, was returning primarily pornographic results for the search term “Black girls.” (Google had previously been criticized for similar results in its search engine and had fixed the search algorithm, but it appears it wasn’t a universal fix.) Searches for “White girls” and “White boys,” however, returned no suggested content for ads at all. Our reporting prompted Google to remove pornographic terms that it was suggesting as “related” when marketers sought to buy ads for the term “Black girls.” We found similarly sexualized and prejudicial suggestions when searching the keyword planner for “boys” and “girls” of other minority races and ethnicities. Google stopped that after we pointed it out as well. These findings indicate that, until The Markup brought it to the company’s attention, Google’s systems facilitated a racial bias that equated people of color with objectified sexualization.

Exposing Discriminatory Ads on Facebook

In August, investigative data reporter Jeremy B. Merrill discovered that Facebook was allowing employers to post ads for jobs that discriminated on the basis of age and race, despite federal law prohibiting the practice. The investigation found that a Wisconsin health care agency, Tenderness Health Care, had used Facebook to post a job listing that would not be shown to anyone older than 54, while showing it specifically to people who have “African American multicultural affinity.” After we brought the ad to Facebook’s attention, the company took the ad down. And a week later they quietly removed the ability of advertisers to target users by race altogether.

Reporting on Dangerous Drugs Being Sold on Amazon

In September, reporter Annie Gilbertson and investigative data journalist Jon Keegan published a second article on dangerous drugs on Amazon, this one outlining how illicit injectable doping drugs were being marketed and sold openly on Amazon. While Amazon had claimed that it had banned such drugs, enforcement failures led to a dangerous swell of listings on the platform. Our team found 66 listings for unproven performance enhancing peptides across Amazon, despite the fact that the company had told us in May that it would begin cracking down on such listings. Following our report, every one of the listings was removed.

Beyond Our Site



Dancers in the Park

In Brooklyn’s Transmitter Park, dancers mapped the browser tests from our Blacklight tool onto their bodies with surveilled movements in a commissioned choreography.



Mural in the Mission

At launch, The Markup posted a mural in San Francisco, showed videos on area buildings, took over a billboard in Silicon Valley, and placed subway ads in New York City.



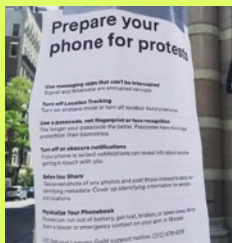
“Scraping is Not a Crime” Day

As the Supreme Court heard *Van Buren v. United States*, leading privacy tech researchers and staff posted photos of themselves wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the argument of The Markup’s amicus curiae brief.



Gaze with Me

Artist Yo-Yo Lin constructed a narrative examining the liminal space between being watched and being seen, using graphical shaders to obscure her image in a video performance (in collaboration with Eyebeam).



Prepare Your Phone

Staff posted a guide along protest routes in New York the week after George Floyd’s death. The guide simplified a Markup article about phone privacy that was shared widely online. Marchers were observed pausing to read the guide and then securing their phones.

Fostering Civic Agency with Forensic Tools

While The Markup is focused on investigating the ways in which technology is reshaping society, we are also highly reliant on technology to perform those investigations. We've hired as many software engineers for our newsroom as we have investigative reporters because we understand the importance of bringing tech expertise to tech reporting.

We have also built custom tools that empower our readers and elevate understanding of critical issues such as data privacy, disinformation, and algorithm bias. Building tools is core to our “journalism-as-a-service” approach, not only to reporting on what's important but to also cultivating a more informed and active readership. We believe journalism is not a one-way conversation in which we only publish stories. We also want to give readers the tools to hold institutions in their lives accountable. During our first year we released three best-in-class investigative tools that helped us tell previously untold stories in a way that was richer and more engaging.

Blacklight—Illuminating the Hidden Infrastructure of the Surveillance Economy

In September, The Markup launched Blacklight, a real-time website privacy inspector that allows anyone to uncover how

their personal data is collected as they browse the internet. Built in-house by a team of investigative journalists and creative technologists, Blacklight is a digital forensics examination that instantly illuminates the hidden infrastructure of the surveillance economy. To expose the various ways in which personal data is siphoned away from the public as people visit websites they rely on, Blacklight runs custom software that performs a series of seven distinct investigative tests, each meant to reveal a different method of surveillance. To-date, more than 900,000 scan requests have been performed using Blacklight.

While Blacklight has the ability to expose the invasive nature of surveillance tech on individuals, it's also a powerful investigative tool for examining macro trends and patterns in surveillance across the internet as a whole. To demonstrate that, the launch of Blacklight was accompanied by a months-long investigation by Aaron Sankin and Surya Mattu. In “The High Privacy Cost of a ‘Free’ Website,” they scanned

81,593 of the world's most trafficked websites. The results painted an unsettling picture about the state of data privacy across the internet.

The Citizen Browser Project—Auditing the Algorithms of Disinformation

Social media platforms are the broadcasting networks of the 21st century and play an enormous role in informing or dis-informing the public. Despite the power they wield in shaping public opinion, they offer the public virtually no visibility into how it all works. So in October we launched our most ambitious initiative yet—a democracy diagnostic tool called The Citizen Browser Project. At the center of The Citizen Browser Project is a custom web browser designed to audit the algorithms that social media platforms use to determine what information they serve their users, what news and narratives are amplified or suppressed, and which online communities those users are encouraged to join.

Blacklight Findings



74%

of sites loaded Google tracking technology



+12,000

websites loaded scripts that watch and record all user interactions on a page—including scrolls and mouse movements



33%

of sites used Facebook tracking technology

13%

of sites did not load any third-party cookies or tracking network requests



+5,000

were “fingerprinting” users, identifying them even if they block third-party cookies

+900,000

scan requests have been performed using Blacklight

With Citizen Browser, The Markup was able to build a national panel of Facebook users who agreed to share real-time data directly from their accounts. This panel allowed us to monitor what is being algorithmically broadcast to social media users in the U.S. across age, race, gender, geography, and political affiliation. In keeping with our commitment to privacy, we implemented Citizen Browser in a way that allowed us to remove and discard any personally identifiable information collected, only using the remaining redacted data in our analyses.

To confront the most pressing questions emerging from today’s increasingly tech-driven world, The Markup relies on tools like Citizen Browser to help us to collect and analyze data at scale. And in one of our first investigations using the tool—“Facebook Said It Would Stop Pushing Users to Join Partisan Political Groups. It Didn’t”—we were able to uncover previously out-of-reach findings, including:

- While Mark Zuckerberg testified under oath before Congress that Facebook had stopped recommending all “political content or social issue groups”—a practice its own internal research has suggested steers users toward divisive and extremist content—we found that Facebook continued to recommend political groups to its users throughout December and January.
- Facebook pushed political groups most often to the Trump voters on our panel—nearly a quarter of Trump voters received recommendations to join political groups, while non-voters on the panel received none.
- Some posts in those groups contained conspiracy theories, calls to violence against public officials,

and discussions of logistics for attending the rally that preceded the Capitol riot.

- A post in the “Rudy Giuliani [Common Sense]” group, which was recommended to 8 percent of Trump voters on our panel, called for Georgia’s governor and secretary of state to be hanged because of their refusal to overturn election results. That post was removed after The Markup contacted Facebook.

Following our investigation, Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) issued a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg asking for an explanation of why Facebook failed to stop recommending political groups and details on how the company plans to correct the issues.

Simple Search

In July, investigative reporter Adrienne Jeffries and investigative data journalist Leon Yin published an investigation into how Google advantages itself by returning search engine results to its users that point disproportionately back to its own products. In an analysis of more than 15,000 popular search queries, they found that Google devoted 41 percent of the first page of search results on mobile devices to its own properties and info boxes. That figure jumped to 63 percent when we examined the equivalent of the first screen on an iPhone X. To bring those results to life, investigative data journalist Maddy Varner and our graphics editor, Sam Morris, created Simple Search—a browser extension that lets people travel back in time to see what their search results would look like if Google didn’t fill up the top of the results page with its own content. Tools like Simple Search allow each reader to see how a larger issue affects them personally.

The Tech All Around Us

Independent investigative reporting is at the core of The Markup's work. In our first year, we published numerous original investigations that were many months in the making. Once published, those investigations often took on a life of their own and led to material improvements in the real world. Here are some of the highlights.

Reporting on Allstate's Secret Algorithm Cited in Policyholders Lawsuit

In February, The Markup and Consumer Reports teamed up to publish an investigation into a secret algorithm employed by Allstate to charge higher insurance rates to those who it determined were less likely to shop around for better deals. Allstate policyholders in Texas later filed a lawsuit against the company alleging discriminatory conduct that cited our reporting, and that customers who would have received significant rate hikes were disproportionately middle-aged, male, and living in communities that Census data indicated were more than 75 percent "nonwhite."

We Filed Public Records Requests in All 50 states

In March, during the early days of the pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control released guidance on who should be prioritized when conducting coronavirus testing. However, each state developed its own formula to determine who qualified

for a test. To better understand the algorithms and protocols used by each state to determine who could be tested, reporter Colin Lecher filed public records requests with all 50 states and the District of Columbia. We found sharp contrasts among states' coronavirus testing protocols, illuminating materially different public health responses.



Iowa Updated its Official Coronavirus Website to Better Serve People with Vision Impairments

In April, investigative reporter Adrienne Jeffries was the first to identify how those with vision impairments were being poorly served by nearly all 50 state government coronavirus websites. Our reporting into these sites, which launched in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak with important public health updates, found that 41 of the 50 state pages we surveyed contained low-contrast text, which can be challenging for users with low vision. Following our investigation, Iowa updated its website to better serve people with vision impairments, including seniors, who have been at higher risk during the outbreak.

Landlords and Risk Scores

In May, investigative reporter Lauren Kirchner published an investigation into how landlords are increasingly using software to assign a “risk score” to applicants and to predict who will be a good tenant. She pored over hundreds of lawsuits in which prospective tenants had sued some of the more prevalent tenant-screening companies under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. Investigative data journalist Surya Mattu helped automate the process by writing a program to download each case’s docket and court complaint, convert the complaint PDF into searchable text, and highlight those that contained search terms relevant to our investigation. We then teamed up with New York Times reporter Matthew Goldstein, and together he and Lauren found patterns of systemic sloppiness in the way screening software worked and who it harmed in their pursuit of finding housing. In the absence of congressional action, several cities, counties, and states across the country are currently debating various versions of tenants’ rights bills that would limit landlords’ use of screening services. Our reporting was cited several times in a public hearing about one such bill in Washington, D.C.



ASK THE MARKUP

We regularly publish new articles in our “Ask The Markup” series with detailed explanations into arcane issues or timely topics. In our first year, we answered dozens of questions across a wide spectrum of subjects and concerns. Here are 10 of the most popular:

- What are ghost kitchens?
- How private is my pay app?
- What are geofence warrants?
- Who’s allowed to track my kids online?
- How do I prepare my phone for a protest?
- Can I opt out of facial scans at the airport?
- Can a robot decide my medical treatment?
- I just got a COVID-19 test. Who now knows I got it?
- My boss wants me to use my fingerprint to clock in. Is that legal?
- Data-informed predictive policing was heralded as less biased. Is it?

Do you have a question you’d like to ask The Markup? Email us:

ask@themarkup.org

Our Team

FOUNDER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Julia Angwin

PRESIDENT
Nabiha Syed

MANAGING EDITOR FOR
INVESTIGATIONS
Evelyn Larrubia

CHIEF OF STAFF
Korey Te Hira

NEWS EDITOR
Rina Palta

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT
Ramsey Isler

INFRASTRUCTURE ENGINEER
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Lauren Kirchner

FULL STACK ENGINEER
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REPORTER
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REPORTER
Colin Lecher

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER
Aaron Sankin

COPY EDITOR / PRODUCER
Jill Jaroff

INVESTIGATIVE DATA JOURNALIST
Emmanuel Martinez

INVESTIGATIVE DATA
JOURNALIST
Maddy Varner

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER
Adrienne Jeffries

INVESTIGATIVE DATA JOURNALIST
Surya Mattu

OFFICE MANAGER
AND EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Wynton Wong

INVESTIGATIVE DATA JOURNALIST
Jon Keegan

GRAPHICS EDITOR
Sam Morris

INVESTIGATIVE DATA
JOURNALIST
Leon Yin

REPORTER
Dara Kerr

REPORTER
Alfred Ng

Partners

To strengthen our work and amplify the impact of our stories, The Markup often develops strategic partnerships with organizations that complement our skills and extend our reach. In our first year of publication we were proud to work with some of today's most well-regarded media outlets and institutions, including: CNN, Consumer Reports, The Guardian, and The New York Times.

Governance

The Markup benefits from the steadfast guidance of our Board of Directors. These exceptional leaders share our long-term vision for building a successful nonprofit newsroom that uses technology to investigate technology. And they've been there for us in so many ways during our first year of bringing The Markup to life.

From Our Board Chair

At its best, journalism speaks truth to power. These days, no segment of our society is more powerful—and none more in need of truth-telling—than “Big Tech,” the corporate leviathans that impact every aspect of modern life.

Enter The Markup.

In their first year, the journalists and technologists of this innovative initiative have delivered on this profound challenge. To wit:

- They revealed that Google, which promotes itself as a gateway to the content of others, increasingly hoards traffic for itself—a finding Congress has included in its antitrust probe of the company.
- They exposed that Amazon, in violation of its own promises of safety, has for years facilitated the sale of products that are routinely used for illegal and/or dangerous activities, including weapons and narcotics paraphernalia.
- They explained how Facebook pushed incendiary political content to readers vulnerable to misinformation and continued to do so even after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

And unlike other journalists, they did all of this with refreshing transparency, employing a “Show Your Work” philosophy that leaves no doubt about the veracity of findings.

The Markup not only educates readers, it empowers them: It empowers them by introducing cutting-edge technological tools such as Blacklight and Citizen Browser, tools that help all of us understand how our digital pathways are surreptitiously tracked and directed.

Quite an inaugural year. We, the Board of Directors of The Markup—ourselves a collection of journalists, technologists, educators, and entrepreneurs—could not be prouder to be a part of it.

We welcome you to join us in supporting The Markup.



David Boardman
Chair
The Markup

The Markup's Board of Directors

CHAIR

David Boardman

David Boardman is dean of the Klein College of Media and Communication at Temple University in Philadelphia. Since joining the college in 2013, Boardman has led major strategic initiatives that have raised its profile and standing. In 2018, Klein College received the nation's top Equity and Diversity Award from the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

Previously, Boardman was executive editor and senior vice president of The Seattle Times, the largest news organization in the Pacific Northwest. Under his leadership, the Times won four Pulitzer Prizes and produced 10 Pulitzer finalists. Boardman himself has been the recipient of numerous other major national awards, including the National Ethics Award from the Society of Professional Journalists, the Goldsmith Prize in Investigative Reporting from Harvard University, and the Associated Press Managing Editors Public Service Award.

In addition to chairing the board of directors of The Markup, Boardman is chair of the Lenfest Institute for Journalism, the nonprofit that owns The Philadelphia

Inquirer, and on the board of The Solutions Journalism Network. Boardman is also a past president and board member of Investigative Reporters and Editors and of the American Society of News Editors.

DIRECTOR

Melissa Harris-Perry

Professor Melissa Harris-Perry is the Maya Angelou Presidential Chair at Wake Forest University, where she teaches courses on American politics and elections at the intersection of race, place, and gender.

Melissa is editor-at-large of ZORA, a Medium publication for women of color. Along with her husband, James Perry, she is principal of the Perry Partnership, which offers both private and political consulting. From 2012 to 2016 she hosted the television show "Melissa Harris-Perry" on weekend mornings on MSNBC and was awarded the Hillman Prize for broadcast journalism. From 2016 to 2019 she served as editor-at-large for Elle.com and a contributing editor for The Nation. She is an award-winning author and sought-after public speaker, lecturing widely throughout the United States and abroad.

Harris-Perry received her

B.A. in English from Wake Forest University and her Ph.D. in political science from Duke University. She also studied theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Harris-Perry previously served on the faculty of the University of Chicago, Princeton University, and Tulane University. Professor Harris-Perry has been awarded honorary degrees from many universities, including Meadville Lombard Theological School, Winston-Salem State University, Eckerd College, New York University, and Ithaca College.

DIRECTOR

Stuart Karle

Stuart Karle is the general counsel and a partner of North Base Media, a boutique firm that invests in and manages funds investing in media and technology companies that serve major growth markets. With expertise in legal issues related to media and media technology, Karle also works with portfolio companies when they confront press freedom, intellectual property, and regulatory issues.

Before joining NBM in 2014, Karle was the chief operating officer of Reuters News, a division of Thomson Reuters and then the largest

independent news organization in the world. Karle was a member of the leadership team that restructured and reinvigorated the news agency. From 1992 until 2008, Karle was a lawyer at Dow Jones & Company, Inc., ultimately serving as a vice president and general counsel of The Wall Street Journal.

He is the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Columbia Daily Spectator, Columbia University's student newspaper, and was a founding member of the international advisory board of the Media Legal Defence Initiative. Before attending law school, Karle was a reporter for the Capital Markets Report, published by the Dow Jones News Service.

DIRECTOR
Paul Ohm

Paul Ohm is a professor of law and the associate dean for academic affairs at the Georgetown University Law Center and serves as a faculty director for the Center on Privacy and Technology and the Institute for Technology Law and Policy. His research focuses on information privacy, computer-crime law, intellectual property, and criminal procedure.

With an undergraduate degree in computer science and professional experience as

a network systems administrator, Ohm works to build interdisciplinary bridges between law and computer science. He served as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Department of Justice's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section and a senior policy adviser to the Federal Trade Commission.

DIRECTOR
Dele Olojede

Dele Olojede is the founder and host of the annual Africa in the World festival, which brings together provocative thinkers from around the world in the Cape winelands of South Africa to discuss some of the largest challenges and opportunities facing Africa. A writer, editor, and publisher over nearly four decades, he has been a correspondent in New York, Johannesburg, and Beijing, reported from more than 75 countries, and published an investigative newspaper in Lagos.

He is a moderator of the Aspen Institute's leadership seminars and a fellow of its global leadership network. He serves on the global advisory board of Luminate, the board of EARTH University in Costa Rica and various other organizations. He is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 2005 for his reporting on the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide.

DIRECTOR

Nicole Wong

Nicole Wong specializes in assisting high-growth technology companies to develop international privacy, content, and regulatory strategies. She served as deputy U.S. chief technology officer in the Obama administration, focused on internet, privacy, and innovation policy.

Before her time in government, Wong was Twitter's legal director for products and Google's vice president and deputy general counsel. She frequently speaks on issues related to law and technology, including five appearances before the U.S. Congress. She chairs the board of Friends of Global Voices, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting citizen and online media projects globally. She also sits on the boards of WITNESS, an organization supporting the use of video to advance human rights, and the Mozilla Foundation, which promotes the open internet, and she is co-chair of the Digital Freedom Forum and an adviser to the AI Now Institute, the Alliance for Securing Democracy, Luminate, Refactor Capital, and the Albright Stonebridge Group.

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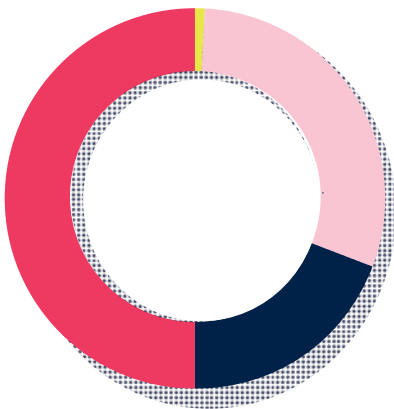
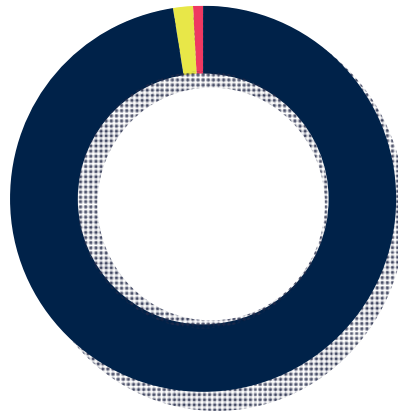
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 - SMALL DOLLAR DONATIONS **\$79,897**
 - SPONSORSHIP **\$25,000**
-
- TOTAL \$4,204,897**



Expenses

- NEWSROOM SALARIES AND BENEFITS **\$2,299,763**
 - NON-NEWSROOM SALARIES AND BENEFITS **\$880,840**
 - OFFICE AND OPERATIONS **\$1,369,659**
 - OTHER **\$32,074**
-
- TOTAL \$4,582,336**

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