Social Media & Agenda Setting:
Contemporary Applications and Issues
Call for 2021, Issue 1 (revised March 31, 2020)

Agenda setting theory is well studied. However, the media environment is rapidly shifting --- it’s more diverse and digital than ever before. Studies have gone from measuring hundreds of news articles in a handful of media outlets to millions of messages on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

This special issue calls for agenda-setting research that incorporates social media. Specifically, we see the following areas as ripe for study:

New Actors
Contemporary research is beginning to show that anyone can set media and policy agendas: elite media, politicians, lobbyists, special interests, and even communities of people. We encourage research that considers unique publics, broadly construed, on social media platforms.

New Platforms
The number of social media platforms in which the agenda-setting effect can be observed continues to expand. Here we encourage work that studies new platforms, such as Weibo, Wechat, WhatsApp, Instagram, Reddit, and other rising platforms.

Social Media as Political/Policy Communication
Politicians, organizations and interest groups all dedicate resources to generating political social media content. To what extent do these communications influence public policy? Do policy agendas for politicians on social media predict their offline political actions (e.g., voting behavior, bill sponsorship)? To what extent do social media agendas influence audiences, both online and offline?

Methodological Concerns
While the agenda-setting effect is ripe for study on social media, serious methodological concerns exist. What are bots doing to measures of issue salience, in both the media and in the scholarship? Twitter, Facebook, Weibo, and even YouTube can be thought of as both measures of audience and media salience. How do we separate audiences and media on social media platforms? Finally, social media imply big datasets. How can computerized content analyses reasonably and validly measure the presence of issue and attribute mentions on social media? We welcome methodological explorations and best practices.

Networked Agendas
Network agenda setting continues to influence the definition of what an agenda means, and how it can best be visually represented. This issue calls for innovative networked studies of social media agendas.

Do Social Media Effects Matter?
Do social media agendas effect broader behaviors? Does social media emphasis on an issue spark congressional action? We welcome research that maps social media agendas to offline contexts.

International Contexts
In some nation states, governments exhibit control on social media platforms. This issue calls special attention to the degree in which agenda setting control can be measured. Do platforms mirror government agendas? How does government surveillance alter the agenda setting effect?
To be considered for the first 2021 issue, authors should submit their articles no later than June 1, 2020. In order to better accommodate current world events and the shift from many academic conferences to an online format, we have extended our original deadline of April 15th, 2020 by an extra month and a half.

Any submissions should be sent via the portal at: https://www.editorialmanager.com/asj/default.aspx. Please denote “social media issue” in the comments section of the submission form.

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