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Mapping Nazi History: Charting Current Controversies About Hitler’s Regime through Digital Media

Shelby Young, Michela Sieman and Eliza Chase
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Abstract

This project explores the representations of the Nazi regime in digital media today. By analyzing English Wikipedia pages related to Nazi Germany, we aim to examine this relationship in terms of discovering biases behind editors and editing trends. With the prevalence of digital media and technology in today’s society and information now at everyone’s fingertips, it is important that this information is represented truthfully and with no hint of personal bias or unsupported claims. This project is ongoing as new edits are continuously added and each edit we analyze breaks into different directions of research. Despite the inability to produce conclusive results, the project has already identified trends of Wikipedia editing, the types of editors on the Nazi Germany pages, and some reasons that pages are being changed. For example, we discovered extreme gender disparity among editors—no surprise since estimates suggest that 90% of Wikipedia editors are male. We have also detected cases of cyber bullying committed by men towards female editors, further skewing the perspectives of Wikipedia. In addition, we have encountered a suspected case of unauthorized use of multiple accounts by a single editor, as well as copyright violations that fell under the umbrella of our prerogative to uncover the potential biases in these pages.

Introduction

Our overarching purpose in deciphering the representation of Nazi Germany on digital media is to discover the multiple forms of bias and unreliable information that are now available to people everywhere due to the internet. While our specific focus is on the Nazi regime, we found cases outside of these pages that fell under the umbrella of our prerogative to uncover the potentially partial views present on the only-somewhat regulated Wikipedia, making this a project that can contribute not only to the objectivity of Nazi-related pages, but to all pages.

Methodology

The project was addressed through three different methods to track bias in Nazi pages.

- The first method is looking at Wikipedia editors and tracking their edits in Wikipedia pages. This is done by looking at the Revision History tab on any particular Nazi page, then singling out editors who have made significant contributions to the article.
- The second method addresses what information the editors are using to create content in the articles and where from they are getting that information. To disseminate this information article citations were clicked on in the page’s Works Cited sections.
- The third method looks specifically at citations on Nazi related pages to check for inconsistencies and plagiarism. Information gained from the citations would be cross-referenced with edit information on the Revision History, from older to newer edits, as seen in Figure 1.

Discussion

Interests in the project revolved around editors, their backgrounds, their relationships with other editors and how this affected the information they changed on a page. For example, one case on the main page of study, Gleichschaltung, led to the identification of an editor who had been banned for reasons pertaining to copyright violations and use of multiple accounts. This editor named Zumoarirodoka is the second top editor of the page. By furthering research on this editor the project led to a string of informative findings that relate to various cases of misuse of Wikipedia. This specific string of findings negatively affects the authenticity and academic honesty of Gleichschaltung, therefore discrediting the reliability of Wikipedia.

Furthermore, one segway of interest this project took was locating a multi-front website that sells copyright expired and self-published content. This finding further prompted questioning of how Wikipedia allows self-published works from this multi-front site. Due to the potential misuse of information in self-published content the project led to repeated attempts to infiltrate this site to warn Wikipedia of the potential harmful information on pages.

As the project is still in progress, there are now attempts to connect one on one with editors of Nazi Germany pages in hopes to prevent and discuss misuses of Wikipedia as well as potential biases in these pages.

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