Seminar – Science, technology and the Web

Reading:

Questions/thoughts for your seminar discussion

1. You might want to begin by summarising the paper – agreeing the key points and main argument(s). It might help to think about the different time points described, and the analysis of terms/words. You should also note the methods used. Ideally you should be able to come up with a 2-3 sentence summary of what the paper argues.

2. Some of the terminology used may be unfamiliar - make sure you do the necessary reading/discuss with others to ensure you understand key terms that are likely to reoccur in the module (one such term might be post-structuralism).

3. Continuity and change is a core theme in this paper and in how we present/discuss the Web in this module. What are the different elements of this presented in the paper? Do you agree with the analysis presented and the interpretation offered? What is the ’cautious rhetoric’ and what do the authors say it accomplished?

4. The paper describes a ‘narrative of invention’. Drawing on the lecture and your wider reading discuss/describe/make a counter narrative of social construction or social shaping – what might this include, how might we investigate/explore this (what methods, philosophical and theoretical perspectives might we draw on)?

5. Bonus question: what would a feminist/standpoint theorist make of the account presented in this paper?

Other reading that you might find useful


Mitroff I. (1974). Norms and Counternorms in a Select Group of Apollo Moon Scientists. American Sociological Review 39:79-95 [this now rather old paper is still a favourite of mine because it is an empirical study of a group that we might never otherwise have access to, but also because it explores, challenges and expands our understanding of ’how science’ works’.]

Catherine Pope
October 2017