

## ALGORITHMIC CENSORSHIP

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### Definition

Algorithmic censorship refers to the automated regulation, suppression, or downranking of digital content through algorithmic systems, often without direct human intervention or transparent oversight. It includes both explicit actions - such as content removal or shadowbanning - and more subtle mechanisms like filtering, decontextualization, or content dilution through distraction and overload. Algorithmic censorship operates across public and private domains: publicly, it governs collective visibility and discourse through platform moderation and policy enforcement; privately, it shapes individual experiences of expression and self-censorship through personalization and recommendation systems. Beyond enforcing community standards or policies, it has a performative role in shaping public discourse: by determining what is visible, prioritized, or silenced, it constructs hierarchies of attention and legitimacy. In this sense, it reflects political, commercial, and ideological logics embedded in algorithmic infrastructures and redefines the conditions of freedom of expression, access to information, and digital participation.

### Context

In contemporary digital environments shaped by algorithmic personalization and platform logics, algorithmic censorship has emerged as a central mechanism for regulating visibility, shaping discourse, and structuring access to information. Unlike conventional, state-driven censorship associated with authoritarian regimes and exercised through bans or legal prohibitions, algorithmic censorship operates more subtly and systemically, embedded within the infrastructures of social media platforms and search engines. In liberal democracies, this form of control simultaneously serves content-regulatory and commercial goals, as algorithms prioritize engagement, profit, and attention rather than pluralism or deliberation. The boundary between state and market governance has thus become increasingly blurred.

Algorithmic censorship is not experienced uniformly. It is closely tied to the construction of digital identities, value-driven filter bubbles, and user participation in shaping their own information silos. Through biased data sets and software design, algorithmic systems may reinforce stereotypes and marginalize certain voices, normalizing structural inequalities under the guise of neutrality. Censorship, in this context, functions less

through explicit prohibition than through algorithmically conditioned visibility, decontextualization, and information overload.

At the same time, users are not passive. Responses to algorithmic censorship include forms of self-censorship, as individuals internalize the logic of platforms and adjust their expression to algorithmic expectations. Conversely, proactive resistance emerges in creative adaptations such as algospeak — coded linguistic practices designed to evade automated moderation and preserve critical discourse. Recognizing algorithmic censorship as both a communicative and epistemological phenomenon therefore enables a deeper understanding of how digital infrastructures govern what can be seen, shared, and known, and how users negotiate these constraints through acts of compliance and resistance.

### **Related Concepts**

Algorithm; Digital Dementia; Digital Divide; Digital Engagement; Digital Empowerment

### **References**

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