

IRIE Due Diligence Process

IRIE evaluated the need for a large-scale research institution and the feasibility of overcoming critical barriers by executing 13 exploratory studies with 20 partners from 17 institutions between February-July 2022. We collected data on 141 different organizations, reviewed 3923 research papers, and hosted 20 meetings with more than 86 researchers.¹ See Appendix A.1 for a comprehensive list of all organizations and instruments analyzed to provide comparisons, best practices, and models for IRIE.

These studies: examined the research process to identify the kinds of infrastructure that could speed discovery, scanned the design space on research administration and funding models, and examined how analogous institutions handle privacy and ethical considerations. Collectively the studies provide a rich evidence base for figuring out how to best stand up an institute like IRIE.

A diverse coalition of civil society organizations, university faculty in the United States and European Union, and researchers at Princeton University's Empirical Studies of Conflict Project and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Partnership for Countering Influence Operations executed these studies. IRIE directors assembled the team based on a balance of subject matter expertise and diversity of backgrounds and experiences. See Appendix A.2 for a comprehensive list of all authors who contributed to the exploratory studies.

IRIE staff provided researchers with a broad concept of the institute, the research question, and the scope of work for each study. To ensure that researchers did not influence each other, IRIE asked that the researchers not cooperate or discuss their exploratory study with other IRIE collaborators until complete. Based on experience in researching the information environment and organization building, IRIE staff developed the research question and scope of work for each study. IRIE's Advisory Board then utilized its unique expertise to provide input and ultimately approve each exploratory study.

The following were the exploratory studies' topics:

- **Research Process 1 (RP1) Current Academic Research on the Information Environment:** A review of research production steps used to understand the information environment based on a systematic review of top general interest and field journals. The key

¹ Results from the exploratory studies are not exhaustive of the entire information environment field. Nonetheless, the exploratory studies help to generate a better understanding of some current commonalities and challenges in the field that IRIE can address.

questions were: what data generation processes are being followed? How are academics getting data to study social media?

- **Research Process 2 (RP2) Social Media Data in Conflict Research:** A review of collections and analytics for understanding the role of social media in conflict zones. The critical questions were: How are people getting data to study the role of social media in the most difficult/adverse circumstances? What unique challenges arise in such environments (e.g., the centrality of encrypted platforms or prevalence of misattributed content)?
- **Research Process 3 (RP3) A Survey of Public-Oriented Organizations Analyzing Social Media Disinformation:** A review of research production steps focusing on investigations to precisely identify and attribute malign behavior, e.g., coordinated inauthentic behavior, monetizing misinformation, suppressing voices, and organizing violence. The key questions were: How are people looking at harmful behaviors online with the goal of publicly oriented description and analysis? How are civil society watchdog groups getting data?
- **Research Process 4 (RP4) Scoping the Institute for Research on the Information Environment:** A report on collections, aggregations, and tools which do not currently exist that would enable research on broad questions such as: how much misinformation is circulating; are content moderation efforts working; does social media exacerbate demographic gaps in political participation or mitigate it; how are elites in competitive authoritarian regimes using social media to respond to online opposition? The key questions were: What data should academics have that no one seems to have? What should we build if we could distribute costs better?
- **Research Process 5 (RP5) Civil Society Organizations' Data, Access, and Tooling Needs for Social Media Research:** Interviews with leaders of organizations that sought to enable civil society action about what kinds of artifacts or collections would have made them more effective, e.g., the Virality Project tried to connect with doctors about vaccine misinformation. The critical question was: What data or analytical tools would civil society organizations and those contributing to public understanding like to have that they don't?
- **Research Process 6 (RP6) How Monetization Systems Shape Online Information Environments:** Assessment of the data requirements for understanding more about how monetization systems shape the information environment. The key question was: What different data would civil society and research organizations need in order to see how the for-profit activity shapes the information environment?
- **Research Process 7 (RP7) Accelerating Research with Multi-National Multi-Platform Image Archives:** Assessment of the infrastructure that would enable a broader set of scholars to work with imagery data to understand the information environment.
- **Research Process 8 (RP8) Highlighted Practical Issues and Consensus in Scoping Research on the Information Environment:** Synthesis of all exploratory studies.
- **Research Administration 1 (RA1) Peer Review and Access Models:** Review peer review and access models at large-scale shared scientific instruments.

- **Research Administration 2 (RA2) Financial Models of Large-Scale Scientific Instruments and Organizations:** Review of financial models at large-scale shared scientific instruments.
- **Research Administration 3 (RA3) Existing Initiatives' In-House Technical Capabilities:** Review existing centers and institutes doing repeated social scientific or descriptive analyses on challenges in the information environment. Explain staffing structures, engineering structures, and the work they are producing.
- **Privacy and Ethics 1 (PE 1) Researcher Access to Restricted Government Data:** Review of high-functioning government institutions in democracies that collect and make available sensitive information tied to the identity of individuals or firms (e.g., US Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics), methods for accessing sensitive census data, other government-funded surveys, and legally protected data for research. Report on best practices for sharing sensitive data.
- **Privacy and Ethics 2 (PE2) Social Listening Companies and Access to Sensitive Data:** Review social media monitoring companies' data collection and protection practices. Report on how data are sold, for what purposes, and to whom.

Each research team developed its own research plan and list of organizations and instruments to investigate. IRIE staff enabled the researchers to share the identities of interviewees to avoid duplication.

Appendix A.1

Organization/Instrument	Sector	Scoping Study
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) (United States)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Agorapulse	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Alliance for Securing Democracy	Non-Profit Research	RP3
American National Election Studies	Non-Profit Research	RA2
Aspen Institute: Commission on Information Disorder	Non-Profit Research	RA3
Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array Observatory (ALMA)	Non-Profit Research	RA2
Atlantic Council: Digital Forensics Research Lab (DFRLab)	Non-Profit Research	RA3, RP3
AURIN	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) - DataLab	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)	Non-Profit Research	RA3, RP3, RP5
Awario	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Brand24	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Brandwatch	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Brookings Institution: AI and Emerging Technologies	Non-Profit Research	RA3

Bureau of Economic Analysis (United States)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Bureau of Labor Statistics (United States)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE
Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) Biobank	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Partnership for Countering Influence Operations	Non-Profit Research	RA3
Carnegie Mellon University: Center for Computational Analysis of Social and Organizational Systems (CASOS)	Academia	RA3
Cazadores de Fake News	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3
CDD West Africa	Non-Profit Research	RP5
CEDMO	Academia	RP3
CekFakta.com	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
Center for Countering Digital Hate	Non-Profit Research	RP3
Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT)	Non-Profit Research	RA3, RP5
Centre d'Accès Sécurisé aux Données (CASD): Secure access data center	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
Clemson University: Media Forensics Hub	Academia	RA3, RP3

Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN, European Council for Nuclear Research): High-quality, low-cost medical ventilator	Non-Profit Research	RA1
Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN, European Council for Nuclear Research): Large Hadron Collider	Non-Profit Research	RA2
Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN, European Council for Nuclear Research): Particle accelerator complexes	Non-Profit Research	RA1
Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN, European Council for Nuclear Research): The CERN technology World Wide Web	Non-Profit Research	RA1
Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN, European Council for Nuclear Research): The CERN Grid	Non-Profit Research	RA1
Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI)	Non-Profit Research	RA2
Data & Society Research Institute: Disinformation Action Lab	Non-Profit Research	RA3
Dataminr	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
DE FACTO	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3
DebunkEU	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
Department of Health (Australia)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Digimind	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2

Disinfo Defense League	Non-Profit Research	RP3
Doublethink Lab	Non-Profit Research	RP3, RP5
East Stratcom Task Force: EUvsDisinfo	Government/ Intergovernmental	RA3
EDMO Bellux	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3
EDMO Ireland	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3
Election Integrity Partnership	Non-Profit Research	RP3
Equis Research	Non-Profit Research	RP5
EU Disinfo Lab	Non-Profit Research	RP3, RP5
European Southern Observatory (ESO): The La Silla Observatory	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
European Space Agency	Government/ Intergovernmental	RA2
Event Horizon Telescope	Non-Profit Research	RA2
FactSpace West Africa	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
First Draft News	Non-Profit Research	RP3
George Washington University: Misinformation/Disinformation Lab (Institute for Data, Democracy, and Politics)	Academia	RA3
Georgetown University: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy	Academia	RA3
German Marshall Fund	Non-Profit Research	RP5
Global Disinformation Index	Non-Profit Research	RP3, RP6
GLOBSEC Policy Institute	Non-Profit Research	RA3
Graphika	For-Profit Research	RA3, RP3

Growing up in New Zealand Dataset	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Harvard University: Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society	Academia	RA3
Health and Human Services: HIPAA Privacy Rule	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Hootsuite	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Iberifier	For-Profit Research	RP3
IDMO	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3
Independent Hospital Pricing Authority (IHPA)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Indian Space Research Organization: Mangalyaan Mission	Non-Profit Research	RA2
Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)	Non-Profit Research	RA3, RP3
Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias: Roque de los Muchachos Observatory (Gran Telescopio Canarias)	Non-Profit Research	RA2
Instituto Igarapé	Non-Profit Research	RA3
International Fact-checking coalition	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
Internet Sans Frontiers	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
InternetLab	Non-Profit Research	RP5
Jigsaw	For-Profit Research	RA3
Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Mannheim: GESIS (German Social Science Infrastructure Services) Panel	Non-Profit Research	RA1
Linkfluence	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2

ListenFirst	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Luiss Datalab	Academia	RP3
Maldita	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
Mandiant	For-Profit Research	RP3
Meltwater	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Miburo	For-Profit Research	RP3
Moonshot	For-Profit Research	RP3
Mount Stromlo and Siding Spring Observatories: A 2.3 meter telescope	Academia	RA1
Mount Stromlo and Siding Spring Observatories: The Anglo-Australian Telescope (AAT)	Academia	RA1
Myth Detector	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): James Webb Telescope	Non-Profit Research	RA2
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): The International Space Station	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
National Bureau of Economic Research	Non-Profit Research	RA2
National Center for Health Statistics (United States)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (United States)	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
National Endowment for Democracy: International Forum for Democratic Studies	Non-Profit Research	RA3

National Human Genome Research Institute: The Human Genome Project	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)	Non-Profit Research	RA2
National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago: The General Social Survey (GSS)	Academia	RA1, RA2
National Weather Service: National Digital Forecast Database Graphical Forecasts	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
NetBase Quid	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
New York University: Center For Social Media and Politics (CSMaP)	Academia	RA3, RP3
New Zealand Ministry for Children	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
New Zealand Ministry of Health	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
NOIRLab: Community Science and Data Center	Non-Profit Research	RA2
NOIRLab: Midscale Observatories	Non-Profit Research	RA2
NOIRLab: Vera C. Rubin Observatory	Non-Profit Research	RA2
NORDIS	Non-Profit Research	RP3
North Carolina State University: Laboratory for Analytic Sciences	Academia	RA1, RA2
Northeastern University: Research Infrastructure Project	Academia	RA3
Odipo Dev/Mozilla Foundation	Non-Profit Research	RP5

Open Source Communications, Analytics Research	Academia	RP3
Oxford University: Oxford Internet Institute	Academia	RA3
Politix	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
Prague Security Studies Institute	Academia	RP3
Pro Box	Non-Profit Research	RP3
Programme on Democracy & Technology	Academia	RP3
RAND Corporation: Countering Truth Decay	Non-Profit Research	RA3
Ryerson University: Social Media Lab	Academia	RA3
Shorenstein Center -- Technology and Social Change	Academia	RP3
Signa Lab	Academia	RP3
Sloan Digital Sky Survey: The Sloan Digital Sky Survey	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis	Non-Profit Research	RP3
Sprinklr	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Sprout Social	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Stanford University: Internet Observatory	Academia	RA3, RP3
Statistics Canada: Research Data Centers (RDC) Program	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Stats NZ - New Zealand's Official Data Agency	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1

Synthesio	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Talkwalker	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2
Tattle	Non-Profit Research	RP3, RP5
The Carnegie Observatories: Magellan 6.5 Meter Telescopes	Non-Profit Research	RA2
The Gemini Observatory: Twin 8.1-meter diameter optical/infrared telescopes	Non-Profit Research	RA1, RA2
UK Biobank	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
UK Data Service	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
United Kingdom Ministry of Justice	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
United Kingdom National Health Services	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
University of California, Irvine: UCI Machine Learning Archive	Academia	RA1, RA2
University of Texas: Center for Media Engagement (CME)	Academia	RA3
University of Washington: Center for an Informed Public	Academia	RA3, RP3
US Census Bureau	Government/ Intergovernmental	PE1
Verafiles (Philippines)	Non-Profit Journalism	RP5
VerificadoMX	For-Profit Research	RP3, RP5
VSquare	Non-Profit Journalism	RP3

Who Targets Me	Non-Profit Research	RP5
Zeta Global	For-Profit Social Listening/SMM	PE2

Appendix A.2

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