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Communicating history on

TikTok

Ethics, practices & considerations

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Background

To use TikTok or not has become a pressing question for history institutions and history communicators. At the start of 2022, TikTok was the sixth largest social media platform in the world, with an estimated 1 billion monthly active users.¹ The hashtag #history has more than 56 billion views on TikTok.² TikTok was a recurring topic of conversation at the recent International Federation for Public History conference in Berlin. TikTok was also the subject of a keynote panel at the virtual American Association for State and Local History conference in November 2022. The platform is, along with Instagram, the subject of a €600,000 Euro research study funded by the German government called SocialMediaHistory. As history communicators and history institutions seek to reach public audiences, practical and ethical questions around TikTok need to be answered.

This report will offer an overview of TikTok, articulate concerns held by the History Communication Institute, detail case studies of usage within the history profession, and offer differing viewpoints on the ethical usage of the platform. Ultimately history communicators and history organizations will decide for themselves. Our goal is to provide honest and accurate insights, which can be used to make informed decisions.

This report is primarily aimed at the history profession, but we also envision its relevance to science communicators, journalists, media producers, government organizations, foreign service officers, nonprofits and other entities who use social media to communicate in the public interest. For inquiries, or to further discuss our findings, please contact hci@historycommunication.com.



¹ "Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users," Statista, accessed September 4, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

² As of October 2022.

Executive Summary

The History Communication Institute (HCI) holds numerous concerns about TikTok, its algorithmic design, the business practices of its parent company ByteDance, and the platform's effects on society. However, this report will include counter-arguments to this position, as well as highlight individuals and institutions using the service to communicate historical content.

TikTok is an AI-powered content platform owned by the private Chinese company, ByteDance.

The platform is clouded by a lack of transparency and data protections, and operates within an authoritarian regime known for its numerous human rights violations. In the United States, the House of Representatives' Chief Administrative Officer and a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission have issued warnings against TikTok, citing security concerns and privacy risks.³ In Britain, the Parliament's TikTok account was shut down due to data concerns.⁴ TikTok has been banned in India since 2020. The platform has been a breeding ground for racism, antisemitism, disinformation and conspiracy theories.⁵

Equally concerning is the addictive design of TikTok, how it leverages artificial intelligence and machine learning, and how it captures biometric data from its users. TikTok's true business goals may be to build a massive AI facial recognition database that can be exploited by its parent company ByteDance for other purposes.⁶

³ See "House of Representatives officer warns members of Congress not to use 'high-risk' TikTok," Fox Business News, August 17, 2022, <https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/house-of-representatives-officer-warns-members-congress-not-use-high-risk-tiktok>, and "FCC Commissioner urges Google and Apple to remove TikTok," CBS News via MSN.com, June 30, 2022, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/fcc-commissioner-urges-google-and-apple-to-remove-tiktok/ar-AAZ2u7L>.

⁴ See "UK Parliament closes TikTok account after China data warning," BBC News, August 3, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-62410234> and "UK Parliament shuts TikTok account after MPs raise China fears," South China Morning Post, August 3, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/3187616/uk-parliament-shuts-tiktok-account-after-mps-raise-china-fears>.

⁵ Specific examples of each will be articulated later in this report. It's worth noting, too, that other platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube also have scores of such content.

⁶ See "TikTok Has Started Collecting Your 'Faceprints' and 'Voiceprints.' Here's What It Could Do With Them," TIME.com, June 14, 2021 <https://time.com/6071773/tiktok-faceprints-voiceprints-privacy/> and "TikTok Captures Your Face," Pursuit, July 26, 2021 <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/tiktok-captures-your-face>.

Despite these concerns, a growing number of history organizations and history communicators have established TikTok accounts. In part this is because the platform potentially offers a method for reaching newer and younger audiences, and in part because TikTok's algorithm offers the promise of rapid and wide exposure, which can lead to high numbers of views, large follower counts, media coverage, attention from influential stakeholders and, potentially, funding. The premise that any individual or institution can "go viral" on TikTok is a central part of the platform's allure, reinforced by media coverage. Some history communicators have been able to earn a full-time living from TikTok, and several museums have leveraged the platform for various campaigns.⁷ Case studies in this report will further detail these efforts.

Do these positives outweigh the negatives? Is TikTok an ethical platform for historians and history communicators to use? Do TikTok users really learn history from TikTok? On the final question, more research and funding are needed to know with certainty. It is unknown at this time whether TikTok has made any significant impact on historical learning; we do not have adequate reception studies, nor do we have enough empirical research to know how history content is being produced and consumed and with what effects. At present, the HCI's position is that the current use of TikTok reproduces the hopes of prior social media platforms, a belief that adoption will bring more relevance, awareness, media attention and funding, but without any reliable evidence of improving history education or advancing the values of the history profession. TikTok usage compels history institutions and history communicators to adapt to its norms and values in order to achieve visibility and influence, further embedding social media deeper into our lives. But at what costs?

⁷ See Mary McGillivray, "How museums go viral on TikTok," YouTube video, posted January 18, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmIOMMI5qWA>.

Platform & Statistics

TikTok is a social media application owned by ByteDance, a private equity company headquartered in China.

TikTok is just one of ByteDance's investments and products. ByteDance also own China's largest private hospital chain⁸, several virtual reality companies, gaming companies, and news and educational ventures.⁹ They have also acquired several AI and robotics companies.¹⁰ Founded in 2012, today ByteDance has an estimated annual revenue of \$17 billion.¹¹

TikTok emerged out of three separate products. The first was the video app Douyin, launched in China in 2016. ByteDance then acquired two U.S.-based apps, Flipagram and Musical.ly. Musical.ly was rebranded as TikTok in 2018. Today, Douyin and TikTok run on the same algorithm but with different data: Douyin in China, TikTok in other countries. ByteDance also owns the video app Xigua, which has partnerships with the BBC and Discovery.¹²

Since the rebrand to TikTok, ByteDance has pursued an aggressive growth strategy in the United States and around the world. TikTok reportedly spent nearly \$1 billion on advertising in 2018.¹³ It chiefly advertised on other social media networks, strategically targeting young people—particularly women and girls—on Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat. It also cultivated partnerships with major brands. In 2019, coinciding with the start of the NFL season, the NFL and TikTok announced a multi-year partnership, after which superstar quarterback Tom Brady publicly declared he was joining the app.¹⁴

⁸ TikTok owner ByteDance buys China's biggest private women and children's hospital chain in major healthcare investment, South China Morning Post, August 5, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/tech/big-tech/article/3187854/tiktok-owner-bytedance-buys-chinas-biggest-private-women-and>

⁹ "TikTok, Hospitals and Tutoring Apps: The Many Tentacles Of Chinese Tech Giant ByteDance," Forbes, August 24, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandralevine/2022/08/24/tiktok-parent-bytedance-companies>.

¹⁰ ByteDance organization profiles, Crunchbase, accessed September 4, 2022, https://www.crunchbase.com/organization/bytedance/company_financials.

¹¹ ByteDance company profile, Craft, accessed September 4, 2022, <https://craft.co/bytedance>.

¹² "TikTok, Hospitals and Tutoring Apps," Forbes.

¹³ "TikTok's Videos Are Goofy. Its Strategy to Dominate Social Media Is Serious," Wall Street Journal, updated June 29, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/tiktoks-videos-are-goofy-its-strategy-to-dominate-social-media-is-serious-11561780861>.

¹⁴ "NFL and TikTok Announce Multi-Year Partnership to Bring NFL Content to Fans Around the World," TikTok newsroom, September 3, 2019, <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/nfl-and-tiktok-announce-multi-year-partnership-to-bring-nfl-content-to-fans-around-the-world/> and "Tom Brady Joins Social Media App TikTok," Popculture.com, September 14, 2019, <https://popculture.com/sports/news/tom-brady-social-media-app-tiktok/>.

By the start of 2020, TikTok had surpassed 1.5 billion downloads and users had spent more than \$175 million on the platform.¹⁵

TikTok's growth continued during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during the global lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. Several factors played a role:

1 Tech and social media usage increased across-the-board during Covid-19 lockdowns, along with media consumption. Netflix, Zoom, Pinterest, Clubhouse and Peloton all saw massive increases in users during the pandemic, as did media companies such as CNN. TikTok benefited from a broader increase in media consumption during a period when people were ordered to remain indoors and eager for social connection.

2 TikTok, in particular, prioritized fun and light-hearted content (e.g., dance videos and teenage challenges), which offered an escape from the serious news of the pandemic and the strife of electoral politics, particularly in the U.S.

3 Students not attending school during the pandemic, and home during summers without social activities, massively consumed TikTok, especially as young creators became famous influencers and a few earned millions of dollars from the app.

4 TikTok's emerging class of high school- and college-age influencers publicly displayed dramatic relationships that became fodder for tabloids and gossip publications seeking content amid lockdowns. To quote writer Rachel Monroe, contributor to *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*, "I can trace my own overconsumption [of TikTok videos] to late March [2020]. The more I was afraid to leave my house, the more I became unexpectedly invested in the love lives and shifting friendship alliances of TikTok's young stars... My own social universe offered no gossip; of all the pandemic losses, this was the most trivial, but I nonetheless felt it acutely. The TikTokers stepped in to fill that void."¹⁶

¹⁵ "TikTok Crosses 2 Billion Downloads After Best Quarter For Any App Ever," *SensorTower.com*, April 2020, <https://sensortower.com/blog/tiktok-downloads-2-billion>.

¹⁶ "98 Million TikTok Followers Can't Be Wrong," *The Atlantic*, December 2020,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/charli-damelio-tiktok-teens/616929/>.

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TikTok aggressively leaned into broader trends in social media content: the rising popularity of video-based services (e.g., YouTube, Twitch); the prioritization of short-form content over long-form content; and the promise of viral fame and becoming a social media influencer. During the summer of 2020, TikTok announced the creation of \$200 million creator fund, which has subsequently grown close to \$1 billion.¹⁷ Such a large amount of money available to TikTokers amid lockdowns, school and business closures, unemployment and a stock market crash spurred users to join the app. During the pandemic, some students were reported to have taken their stimulus checks and dropped out of school to pursue TikTok influencer careers.¹⁸

By July 2020, TikTok had nearly 700 million monthly users. In September 2021, it reached 1 billion monthly users. At the start of 2022, it had 1.4 billion monthly users, though not all were active. It is currently the 6th most popular social media platform in the world; more than 1 billion videos are watched on it each day. Only Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Instagram and WeChat have more active users per month.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Introducing the \$200M TikTok Creator Fund," TikTok newsroom, July 2020, <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/introducing-the-200-million-tiktok-creator-fund>.

¹⁸ "98 Million TikTok Followers Can't Be Wrong," The Atlantic, December 2020.

¹⁹ All statistics from "TikTok User Statistics (2022): How many TikTok Users Are There?" DemandSage.com, August 19, 2022, <https://www.demandsage.com/tiktok-user-statistics>.

Public Scrutiny & Controversy

TikTok's ascendance has led to scrutiny over its business practices.

1. The TikTok algorithm

Foremost scrutiny has been on the TikTok algorithm, powered by artificial intelligence. TikTok revolves around its “For You Page”, a highly-addictive endless scroll of videos driven by machine learning. With each interaction on the “For You Page” (#FYP), a user is training the machine to deliver more content with greater precision in order to maximize time on the platform. The Washington Post reported that the average American viewer now watches TikTok for 80 minutes per day, more than time spent on Facebook and Instagram combined.²⁰ As summarized in The Atlantic in 2020, “You’re training the algorithm to entertain you.”²¹

Equally concerning as the addictive design of the #FYP is how ByteDance is leveraging artificial intelligence, and how AI may factor into its larger business objectives. What social media platforms deliver to their users is not what generates revenue. Facebook and Twitter are advertising businesses; users give Facebook and Twitter their data and the data is used to sell ads. The social media interface entices users to give their data willingly, and in exchange users receive “free” platforms to express themselves and connect with others.

It has been theorized that ByteDance's true business is AI facial recognition. Facial recognition AI is one of the most lucrative aspects of artificial intelligence, largely unregulated and littered with ethical concerns. It is big business, however, one in which companies are racing to achieve superiority.

²⁰ “How TikTok Ate the Internet,” The Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2022/tiktok-popularity/>, October 14, 2022.

²¹ “98 Million TikTok Followers Can’t Be Wrong,” The Atlantic, December 2020.

As explained by tech entrepreneur Rana el Kaliouby at SxSW 2022, companies that collect tens-of-millions of human facial expressions can feed them into machine learning applications that will be used for a myriad of functions: to monitor students, to create more addictive media content, to conduct predictive policing, to perform preventative medicine, and, in the case of authoritarian regimes, to monitor, surveil and repress populations.²² To make such technologies work at scale requires millions of examples of diverse people with diverse faces, from which algorithms and deep learning can create inferences.

TikTok might be the means by which ByteDance gathers such a data set—which, when coupled with its AI, healthcare, and education businesses, would give it enormous leverage in the race to monetize emotional AI. It may also be a massive windfall for authoritarian regimes to suppress speech, stifle dissent and target ethnic minorities. TikTok may be a massive AI-facial recognition database, which could explain why it prioritizes and rewards expressive faces. This has been noted by TikTok creators themselves. TikTok star Charli D'Amelio admitted in 2020 that her facial expressions seemed to drive engagement with her content.²³ TikTok star Nick Cho also observed that the face of the creator was critical to success on the platform.²⁴ It has been alleged that TikTok saves the biometric facial information of its users, even when they do not post a video.²⁵

2. Privacy and data collection

TikTok's data collection and privacy settings have come under continual scrutiny. ByteDance's business practices are opaque; not much is known about the data it stores and what is done with it. ByteDance's predecessor to TikTok, Musical.ly was fined \$5.7 million by the Federal Trade Commission for illegally collecting names, email address, photographs and other data from children younger than 13-years-old.²⁶ In 2022, an engineer discovered that TikTok's in-app browser was logging all keystrokes from users, including credit card information, passwords and other sensitive data.

²² "AI at SxSW," History Club newsletter, April 10, 2022, <https://jasonsteinhauer.substack.com/p/ai-at-sxsw>.

²³ "98 Million TikTok Followers Can't Be Wrong," The Atlantic, December 2020

²⁴ Conversation with Nick Cho on Clubhouse, October 13, 2020.

²⁵ "TikTok claims it's not collecting US biometric data, despite what privacy policy says," TechCrunch, September 14, 2022, <https://techcrunch.com/2022/09/14/tiktok-claims-its-not-collecting-u-s-users-biometric-data-despite-what-privacy-policy-says>.

²⁶ "Don't look for the Hong Kong protests on TikTok. You won't find them." Sydney Morning Herald, September 17, 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/don-t-look-for-the-hong-kong-protests-on-tiktok-you-won-t-find-them-on-platform-20190917-p52s08.html>.

In a statement, TikTok confirmed such functions existed but claimed they were only being used to debug, troubleshoot and improve the user experience.²⁷

3. Relationship with the Chinese Communist Party

TikTok's potential relationship with the Chinese Communist Party has drawn scrutiny from government officials in multiple countries. In the United States, the House of Representatives' Chief Administrative Officer and a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission have both issued warnings against TikTok, citing security concerns and privacy risks.²⁸ In Britain, the Parliament's TikTok account was shut down due to data concerns.²⁹ According to the South China Morning Post, TikTok was among 30 apps to provide information on its algorithms to the Cyberspace Administration of China.³⁰ It is unclear how this information might be used; however, it is worth noting that governments and human rights organizations have accused China of genocide and human rights violations, alleging that a "pervasive network of surveillance" contributes to ongoing abuses.³¹ Chinese authorities have denied these claims.

4. Hate speech, content moderation, and content suppression

Hate speech and disinformation have flourished on TikTok. A study by scholars Gabriel Weimann and Natalie Masri found that Holocaust denial and calls to murder Jews were rampant on the platform. When brought to TikTok's attention, 76 percent of the posts were not removed; when content was removed, the offending users were not banned, allowing them to continue to post hateful content.³²

²⁷ Website of Felix Krause, accessed September 4, 2022, <https://krausefx.com>.

²⁸ See "House of Representatives officer warns members of Congress not to use 'high-risk' TikTok," Fox Business News, August 17, 2022, <https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/house-of-representatives-officer-warns-members-congress-not-use-high-risk-tiktok>, and "FCC Commissioner urges Google and Apple to remove TikTok," CBS News via MSN.com, June 30, 2022, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/fcc-commissioner-urges-google-and-apple-to-remove-tiktok/ar-AAZ2u7L>.

²⁹ "UK Parliament shuts TikTok account after MPs raise China fears," South China Morning Post, August 3, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/3187616/uk-parliament-shuts-tiktok-account-after-mps-raise-china-fears>.

³⁰ China's internet watchdog receives app algorithm information from Alibaba, Tencent, ByteDance, South China Morning Post, August 13, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/tech/big-tech/article/3188776/chinas-internet-watchdog-receives-app-algorithm-information-alibaba>.

³¹ "Who are the Uyghurs and why is China being accused of genocide?" BBC.com, May 24, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>.

³² "TikTok's Spiral of Antisemitism," authors Gabi Weimann and Natalie Masri, pre-print provided to the HCI by Dr. Weimann, fall 2022.

Scholars also found large amounts of “extremist content, racist postings, calls for attacking minorities, ethnic groups, people of colour, Muslims, and Jews, as well as postings sharing neo-Nazi propaganda.” This content was distributed widely by the #FYP algorithm.³³ TikTok has also been implicated in the suppression of the Hong Kong protest movement;³⁴ removal of war crime evidence in Ukraine;³⁵ suppression of LGBTQ+ content;³⁶ dissemination of Covid-19 vaccine disinformation³⁷; and QAnon conspiracy theories.³⁸

As questions around TikTok’s business practices have intensified, so, too, have TikTok’s lobbying efforts in Washington. ByteDance spent \$3.9 million on lobbying in 2020 and \$6.54 million on lobbying in 2021. The company spent more than \$2.3 million on lobbying in spring 2022 alone.³⁹

Despite these realities, a growing number of history organizations and history communicators have established TikTok accounts. The TikTok algorithm is not predicated on follower counts, follower graphs or pre-selected interests.⁴⁰ This potentially allows TikTok creators to find a much larger viewership for their videos than on other platforms; an account does not need to have a large following to amass a high number of views, nor does an account have to use the app for very long to achieve widespread attention.

This can hold appeal for historically marginalized voices, and history institutions and history communicators with limited resources. TikTok hashtags such as #LGBTQHistory, #NativeTikTok and #BlackHistory have questioned established canons and curricula on the app and can potentially surface marginalized narratives to more people.⁴¹

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Don’t look for the Hong Kong protests on TikTok.” Sydney Morning Herald.

³⁵ “TikTok resists calls to preserve Ukraine content for war crime investigations,” Financial Times, July 15, 2022.

³⁶ “TikTok admits restricting some LGBT hashtags,” BBC News, September 10, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-54102575>.

³⁷ Tweet by Taylor Lorenz (@TaylorLorenz), Twitter, December 19, 2020. Captured via screen shot on December 22, 2020, URL no longer retrievable.

³⁸ Quote Tweet by Taylor Lorenz (@TaylorLorenz) of Alex Kaplan (@AlKapDC), Twitter, December 3, 2020. Captured via screen shot on December 22, 2020, URL no longer retrievable.

³⁹ “TikTok spends record amount on lobbying blitz targeting House, Senate, and White House,” Washington Examiner, July 27, 2022 <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/technology/tiktok-record-lobbying-spend-china-joe-biden>.

⁴⁰ “How TikTok Ate the Internet,” The Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2022/tiktok-popularity/>, October 14, 2022.

⁴¹ Andrea Lorenz and Mia Berg, “Participatory historiography? Past-related knowledge production on TikTok”, ECREA conference, Digital Culture and Communication Section, 2022.

The promise of rapid success and exposure, which can lead to media coverage, acclaim and funding, are part of the allure of TikTok, a narrative perpetuated by media stories. For example, author Colleen Hoover has been chronicled by numerous media outlets for her book sales generated by TikTok.⁴² A high school literature teacher in St. Louis has gained more than 50,000 followers creating videos about comic books and, as a result, was featured in The Washington Post.⁴³ A user named Miss Excel, who sells courses on how to use Microsoft products, was featured by several media outlets for her software training business that generates “up to six figures of revenue a day.”⁴⁴ TikTok’s communications strategy sells its users on the promise that anyone can “go viral,” including historians and history communicators. A few history institutions and history communicators have achieved such results.

⁴² "How TikTok Ate the Internet," The Washington Post.

⁴³ "How TikTok Ate the Internet," The Washington Post.

⁴⁴ "How an Excel TikToker manifested her way to making six figures a day," The Verge, November 30, 2021, <https://www.theverge.com/22807858/tiktok-influencer-microsoft-excel-instagram-decoder-podcast>.

Case Studies from the History Profession

What follows are four case studies of TikTok usage by (1) a history museum; (2) an academic historian; (3) an independent history communicator; and (4) a collection of Holocaust memorial sites.

**Sacramento
History Museum**

L.K. Bertram

Kahlil Greene

**TikTok - Shoah
Education and
Commemoration
Initiative**

Sacramento History Museum

@sachhistorymuseum

The Sacramento History Museum in Sacramento, California, began to use TikTok during the summer of 2020. The museum's facilities had been closed since March, with employees and volunteers working from home. Jared Jones, the museum's social media manager, was posting on Facebook and Instagram during lockdown and learned about TikTok while attending the National Association for Interpretation "InterpTech" virtual conference. He began experimenting with the platform using a personal account and found some receptivity for history-related content.

Jones approached his supervisors about establishing a TikTok presence for the Sacramento History Museum in July 2020. His colleagues were not familiar with the platform, but they allowed him to experiment with it. The initial videos received several thousand views. However, a breakthrough came when Jones approached one of the museum's elder volunteers, named Howard, about appearing in the videos. Howard had volunteered at the museum for more than 20 years and operated the museum's historic printing press. Once the museum allowed docents and volunteers to return to the facilities, Jones began filming TikTok videos of Howard operating the press while telling puns and performing visual gags. The videos received hundreds-of-thousands of views, with some surpassing 1 million views. By January 2021, the museum had more than 43,000 TikTok followers, soon doubling to 85,000. One of Howard's printing press videos received more than 17 million views, and Howard became a beloved TikTok star.

The museum continued to post videos of Howard and the printing press alongside videos of other staff members and volunteers. One year after launching their account, the Sacramento History Museum had amassed 1.6 million followers. It currently has 2.3 million and Jones (now promoted to Digital Content Coordinator) is, according to TikTok, the manager of the most followed history museum account in the world on the app.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that the museum's growth rate of followers has slowed considerably. In the first year, they amassed 1.6 million followers, after more than another year later, they gained an additional 700,000, a 56% decrease.

Jones states that TikTok has reshaped the museum's social media presence. TikTok is now the driving force behind their content strategy, and the videos posted to TikTok get posted to other platforms, where they have also seen increases. The museum currently has 386,000 YouTube subscribers, 61,000 Instagram followers, and over 100,000 Facebook followers. Jones believes that TikTok is the driving force behind social media today, pushing all platforms further into short-form videos. "TikTok changed all of social media," Jones says. "The way for museums to stay engaged with their audience is to make short form videos."

The museum's large number of followers on TikTok has garnered news media attention. The museum has been featured on NPR, in The Washington Post, the Sacramento Bee and local news channels. They have also seen an increase in website visits. They have even received monetary donations; last November, during TikTok's giving season, the museum received a \$25,000 donation from TikTok as part of the app awarding \$7 million to nonprofits who use the platform. Anecdotally, many visitors tell Jones that, "I just love the videos your museum makes."

Jones feels that TikTok has greatly increased the museum's exposure, particularly among local audiences. Prior to the pandemic, the museum was not well known. However, the museum cannot say with accuracy how many people visit the museum because of TikTok, and it does not know whether increased use of TikTok has directly led to an increase in visitors, since the Museum was closed during the pandemic.

Jones posts at least one video per day to TikTok, sometimes two or three. He notes that this consistency may not be realistic for some museums, and that TikTok itself recommends posting at least three to five times per week. Jones is on-site at the museum two days per week, which is when he films the videos, typically early in the morning before the museum opens to the public. He spends the remainder of his work hours doing research, administration, and editing. He also works a second job at another museum.

Jones does not have any particular ethical concerns around TikTok. He did not do much research into TikTok prior to using the app, apart from learning what other museums were doing on the platform. Other museums on TikTok he studied included the Black Country Living Museum, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and the Old Salem Museum and Gardens.

Jared has been asked many times why Howard the volunteer developed such a following on TikTok. In Jones's estimation, "I think Howard and a printing press is the trifecta. He is an older individual on a new media platform talking about how people used to communicate or get their news. There is also a nostalgia element to it all." Like other e-history on social media, the combination of emotion, surprise and nostalgia can create a viral history success.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ For analysis of e-history and why it succeeds on social media, see Steinhauer, *History, Disrupted: How Social Media and the World Wide Web Have Changed the Past* (London: Palgrave, 2021). e-history content that leverages on-demand nostalgia, coupled with visually-arresting imagery and surprise or novelty, stands a greater chance of visibility on social media than those that do not.

L.K. Bertram **@socialforscholars on Instagram**

L.K. Bertram is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Toronto and an LGBTQ+ historian. Her work focuses on gender, sexuality, race and digital public history, including social media algorithms. In 2018, she launched an anonymous free course on Instagram on the history of sex work, comprised of short mini-lectures and micro-lessons as Instagram posts and Instagram Reels. The account has grown to more than 40,000 followers. Topics included histories of obscenity laws, histories of censorship, and the role of sex workers and adult entertainers in developing the early internet. The account was intended to give sex workers more access to their historiography and hidden stories. It was also intended to serve as a counterweight to lobbying groups seeking to crack down on sex workers and LGBTQ+ groups online.

In spring 2021, Bertram began experimenting with similar content on TikTok, in order to try and broaden her reach, also as an anonymous account. While she had faced issues with the censorship of academic content on Instagram, she found the restrictions and reactions on TikTok to be more intense. In one example, she cited a TikTok video she created on Eugen Sandow, a gay male model and body builder who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and who also did private performances for customers. According to author Jim Elledge, Sandow had to marry a woman to protect his public image and lived his entire life in the closet. When he died, his wife burned his letters and buried him in an unmarked grave. Bertram posted a TikTok video about Sandow's life and Elledge's book and a number of TikTok users attacked it. The comments became so negative—largely directed at Sandow's widow and the idea of having to live a life in the closet—that Bertram removed the video entirely.

Bertram believes that historians from under-represented communities who choose to use their own faces or names in recorded videos on TikTok are at higher risk for unpleasant interactions, including users who want to "vote against" some aspect of how they look, speak or what they study. In Bertram's estimation, TikTok is not sustainable for historians who work on more controversial topic, since BIPOC, queer and women scholars are not treated equally. "TikTok is not really a safe place for historians who come from BIPOC, queer or underrepresented backgrounds because the algorithm is incredibly biased," Bertram says.

Additionally, her experiences on TikTok have led Bertram to believe that TikTok tends to promote histories that conform to a more simplistic, binary view of the past. TikTok favors histories that conform to a "yes or no" or "like or dislike" form, as Bertram describes it. By design, TikTok often does not and cannot widely distribute content that requires critical reflection, but rather urges users to categorize content into a more simplistic "this is good" or "this is bad" framework. The platform promotes or rewards content that presents simplistic views of the past and fabricated disinformation, so long as it elicits emotions such as happiness or pride. As such, Bertram argues that TikTok reinforces a warped view of the past on a vast public scale. She and others have found that the radicalization pathways endemic to YouTube are also visible on TikTok, where heavily simplified and sanitized versions of history lead to increasingly extremist viewpoints.

Bertram also warns that TikTok's restrictions on language regularly ban or block access to accurate historical information. These severe restrictions, and lack of transparency on what is on the list of banned topics or words, make TikTok a non-starter for some academic historians, she says. Though it might be tempting to craft "safe" posts that have a better chance of not being demoted by the platform, Bertram finds this too consuming and ethically dubious, since it erodes the accuracy of the content. As such, Bertram has purposefully limited her activity on TikTok. She does not create original videos for the platform, but will instead re-post her Instagram videos to TikTok from time-to-time. Mostly her TikTok account is a means for her to understand how the platform is evolving.

More broadly, Bertram notes that for historians working on controversial topics such as sex work, it is not solely platforms that will censor material, but also lobbying groups. There are many lobbying groups that go through social media and flag content for the purposes of having it removed. These groups will coordinate their attacks against users, accusing them of violating the platform's terms of service or inciting hate, in an attempt to control the narrative or advocate for a policy position.

Bertram advises any history institution or history communicators who wish to use TikTok--or any social media platform--to define their core values and reasons before they begin. She also recommends writing and defining a statement of technological use that includes thoughts about how content producers plan to manage the platform's biases and restrictions. Platforms inevitably will push content creators into behaviors that could violate their core professional values and objectives, Bertram believes. "It's important to actively define how you will use these kinds of tools for yourself," she argues, "and not to let a company decide how they will use you."

Overall, Bertram advocates for an "algorithmically-aware public history practice," one that understands the algorithms and policies of large platforms while also safeguarding potentially controversial content and personal health. Bertram says that Instagram feels like a place where she can achieve that; TikTok feels like a place where that is not possible. She holds reservations about TikTok's viability as a platform for reliable public history, particularly on topics such as slavery, sexuality, gender expression and colonialism. To help other historians and history communicators navigate these issues, she established an Instagram account called @socialforscholars, which offers advice and tips to use algorithmic awareness in order to maximize reach.

Kahlil Greene, "The Gen Z historian" **@kahlilgreene**

Kahlil Greene graduated from Yale University in 2021 and self-identifies as "The Gen Z historian." He made his first TikTok video in 2021 on Martin Luther King Day. The video was made in response to what he perceived to be a white-washing of MLK's legacy online. For example, Greene saw the FBI posted an MLK quotation on its social media despite the FBI's surveillance of MLK during his lifetime. Greene made a TikTok video about King's legacy and how he believed it had been misused. His video received more than 1 million views in its first day.

From there, Greene made additional videos about MLK. The videos used excerpts from MLK's writings to share what Greene described as "Non-wh1tewashed MLK quotes." The videos each received tens-of-thousands of views. Greene states that "people were shocked" by some of the quotations he shared and of King's more radical views.

In the following months, Greene started a TikTok series called "Hidden History," interspersed with other historically-themed videos. Each video was 1-minute or less, and focused on what he termed the "creepy, crazy and covered-up parts of American history." The themes of the videos centered around racial injustice; topics included the Pledge of Allegiance, the Salem Witch Trials, White hunters using Black children as alligator bait, and White people using Black people's skin as clothing. "The more macabre it was, the more viral it went," Greene observed. Greene said that it became "more of a spectacle than people watching [videos] to learn." In response, Greene transitioned from story-centric videos to more argument-based ones. For example, Greene cited a video he made about Barack and Michelle Obama upholding respectability politics in America. Other videos focused on cultural appropriation, including appropriation on TikTok by White creators of Black creators.

To make his videos, Greene stated that he will do “a lot of reading, copy links, and soak up a bunch of information.” He then synthesizes what he reads, checks references for accuracy, and writes a script as if he is talking to a friend in one minute or less. The scripts are typically 200 words for a 1-minute video; 450 words for a 2.5-minute video. Each video takes 3 to 5 hours to create from start to finish. Greene stressed that he writes his own scripts, noting that many other social justice content creators have writers or creative teams behind them. Greene does not.

Greene currently has more than 575,000 followers on TikTok. He estimates that most of those followers came early on when his first few videos went viral. Greene accumulated more than 70% of his followers within his first five months on TikTok (400K); in the past year he’s accumulated 175K followers.

TikTok has been a gateway to making a living for Greene. Greene sells consulting services, public speaking and brand deals as a result of his TikTok presence. Greene stated that being an influencer online offers social reward, is high-paying, allows him to travel, work from home, and be famous. He plans to continue being an online content creator for the foreseeable future. His status as an influencer has also received attention from The Biden Administration. Greene was invited to a virtual White House briefing on the war in Ukraine, and was subsequently invited to celebrate the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in-person at The White House. These efforts are part of The White House’s strategy to build relationships with TikTok creators in order to promote the administration’s agenda.⁴⁷

Greene advises that institutions and individuals cannot manufacture a TikTok presence. TikTok has a unique culture and idiosyncratic library of references and trends. Those who know the platform well can integrate those references into their content in order to achieve visibility; an outsider would need to use TikTok a lot in order to integrate into its culture. “TikTok is its own world and own language,” Greene stated. “You have to learn the language the play the game. So why not just hire a native speaker?” He advises institutions to hire an influencer or a creator who has demonstrated success on TikTok to create content, advise on strategy, and perform.

⁴⁷ “TikTok stars receive White House briefing on Ukraine, The Washington Post, March 11, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/03/11/tik-tok-ukraine-white-house>.

TikTok also requires a strong understanding of meme formatting and how trends and memes work, Greene said. Institutions have to adapt and format those memes into their content in order to get trending. Trending content includes hashtags, music and sounds, and recent pop culture events. TikTok privileges expressiveness and attention-grabbing content, and also requires editing and captioning knowledge.

Greene does not pay much attention to the data and privacy questions around TikTok. He stated that he is not sure how such practices materially affect him. He also stated that companies collect data all the time and doing so gives him better ads and better videos, so it helps him. He did express concerns about TikTok's poor record on detecting harmful content and community violations. TikTok has flagged some history videos as terrorism. He also said he believes that Black influencers have been suppressed on TikTok. Greene stated that users seem to like history content on TikTok, but they do not seem to care who delivers it. Users can get excited about a new face educating them about history, but he felt that users do not actively feel the absence of history institutions on the platform.

The TikTok - Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative and the Neuengamme Memorial

@neuengamme.memorial

On January 27, 2022, Holocaust memorial sites in Germany and Austria launched a coordinated TikTok campaign to recognize International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The project was titled the “TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative.” Per the project press release, the initiative aimed to expand the visibility of Holocaust sites among new audiences and counter the spread of Holocaust denial and relativization on TikTok.⁴⁸ The effort was supported by the American Jewish Committee Berlin, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Berlin communications firm, werk21 Kommunikation. TikTok’s office in Germany also supported the effort and researchers at Hebrew University conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the initiative.

Several memorial sites and museums participated in the campaign:

- Bergen-Belsen Memorial
- Ravensbrück Memorial Museum
- Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum
- House of the Wannsee Conference
- Jewish Museum Berlin
- Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site
- Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial
- Mauthausen Memorial
- Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial
- Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future (EVZ)
- Villa ten Hompel

⁴⁸ “Presentation of ‘TikTok - Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative,’” American Jewish Committee website, January 26, 2022, <https://www.ajc.org/news/presentation-of-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative>.

The campaign began with the Neuengamme Memorial posting a video to TikTok about the experiences of prisoners in the camp at the time of the liberation of Auschwitz. Other sites, in turn, responded by “stitching” that video into their own videos that recounted prisoner experiences at their sites.⁴⁹ Neuengamme also upload user-generated content to its account as part of the initiative, short videos sent to them by members of third and fourth generation survivors, in collaboration with the Young Committee of the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme.⁵⁰

Neuengamme had begun to use TikTok in November 2021, featuring three young volunteers at the site: Daniel Cartwright, from Great Britain; Justin Warland, from Australia; and Solomia Romanenko, from Ukraine. According to the Neuengamme website, within the first two months of using TikTok, the account registered 10,000 followers, 90,000 likes and 1 million views. “The content has received more attention than the presence of the memorial on any other online platform,” per the Neuengamme website.⁵¹ The videos made by the young volunteers provided historical information about the camp, biographies of prisoners and survivors, and news about upcoming exhibitions. The Neuengamme website noted the levels of comments and interactions with their videos, as well as “the challenge of being active on this medium is to find an appropriate form of communication while using the visual and narrative language of TikTok which is short and concise and uses different narrative layers (writing, image, moving image, music, titles).”⁵²

Many of the site’s TikTok videos feature Daniel Cartwright, an Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ASF) volunteer at the site from September 2021 to August 2022. Cartwright studied at the University of Nottingham in the U.K. and received his Master’s degree in Belgium before becoming a volunteer at Neuengamme.⁵³

⁴⁹ Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon, “Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 seconds?” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Post-print version, original blog post March 24, 2022, available at <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok>.

⁵⁰ “The Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial is part of the ‘TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative’ KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme website, January 28, 2022, <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-neuengamme.de/en/news/news/die-kz-gedenkstaette-neuengamme-ist-teil-der-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “Welcome to our new volunteer,” KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme website, September 13, 2021, <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-neuengamme.de/en/news/news/welcome-to-our-new-volunteer>.

About his experience, Cartwright wrote, “From the beginning I was able to be a part of the team that began the first TikTok account for a Concentration Camp Memorial and one highlight was the success of the TikTok account and seeing it grow... I heard from one of the guides that school groups had asked questions based on the TikToks and one family had decided to visit the memorial because their children had seen the videos... being able to reach so many people was surprising, as well as being able to meet many interesting people from all around the world... In addition the TikTok page has also gained some media attention, both in print and on television and this allowed me to talk about the memorial to a wider audience.”⁵⁴

Cartwright also noted that creating videos on TikTok can come with harassment and negativity. He cautioned the following, “My successor has the possibility to continue the work of the TikTok account although this would only be if they wanted to. Due to the amount of exposure the platform gives you, it means that you are opened up to many negative, often personal comments. Therefore I would not expect my successor to continue making TikTok videos if they did not feel comfortable with it.”⁵⁵

It is worth noting that the TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative emerged, in large part, due to rampant antisemitism and hate speech on social media in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly on TikTok. TikTok announced policy changes at the same time it launched the Shoah Education campaign; beginning on International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2022, when users searched for a term related to the Holocaust on the app, TikTok would include a banner that prompted users to visit aboutholocaust.org, a website jointly created by the World Jewish Congress and UNESCO. Holocaust-related videos on the app now also feature a button to “Learn the facts about the Holocaust” with a link to aboutholocaust.org.

⁵⁴ “Follow me through my years as a volunteer,” KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme website, August 8, 2022, <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-neuengamme.de/en/news/news/begleite-mich-durch-mein-jahr-als-freiwilliger>.

⁵⁵ “Follow me through my years as a volunteer,” August 8, 2022.

Discussion

Is TikTok an ethical platform for history communicators to use?

Taking available information into consideration, the following ethical questions emerge:

- How should history organizations best seek to gain audience, attention and relevance? Must history communicators establish a presence on each new social media platform that emerges—even if such platforms raise ethical concerns?
- Is it ethical for history institutions to have their employees and volunteers use TikTok, particularly students, the elderly or historically-marginalized populations, when doing so means their biometrics will be recorded, facial recognition captured, they risk become addicted to the platform, their content may be censored, and they may be exposed to hate speech, antisemitism or other toxic online behavior? Should institutions put their employees in such situations without proper support and training—even when volunteers and staff express enthusiasm to participate? How does this disproportionately affect women, LGBTQ+ and persons of color?
- Are public audiences actually learning history from TikTok? Is there evidence that TikTok is advancing history education—or is TikTok simply replicating prior e-history conventions that have proven to generate attention on social media, i.e., surprise, shock, nostalgia, anniversary-themed content or simplistic interpretations of the past? Is TikTok an educational tool, or solely a tool for marketing, publicity and media coverage?
- How much should individuals and institutions consider broader questions about social media in their decisions about certain platforms? How should history organizations evaluate the trade-offs between what may benefit an individual institution versus what may be detrimental to society writ-large? Does TikTok advance the history profession in meaningful ways?

Ethical questions permeate the work of contemporary historians. Historians and history organizations have spoken out on climate change, and demanded institutions divest from fossil fuels. History institutions have insisted that “museums are not neutral” and have drawn lines in the proverbial sand on social justice issues. Ethical considerations are, in many ways, central to the work of history communicators today, and the History Communication Institute exists, in part, to help think through the ethical questions around communicating history online. It is, thus, fair to ask how ethics of history practice should be applied to social media.

We now have lessons and findings from 20 years of social media usage that can help us in our evaluation of TikTok. With each new social media platform that emerges, historians have hoped that they would increase engagement with public audiences and improve the relevance of the history profession. While each platform affords some historians and history communicators broad reach, no evidence has emerged that massive social media usage correlates positively to improved history education, history funding, or public knowledge of history among the broader public, at least in the United States.⁵⁶

There is little evidence, too, that social media has consistently advanced equity, democracy, human rights or other values that the history profession upholds. Social media has been as much a tool for digital repression and replication of biases as it has for free expression and equality.⁵⁷ TikTok has as much potential to aid repression and surveillance, undermine democracy and disrupt and displace professional history as much as it does the opposite—much like TikTok is doing to other industries.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See History, *Disrupted: How Social Media & the World Wide Web Have Changed the Past* (London: Palgrave, 2021) for a full analysis of what social media platform usage has meant for public understandings of history.

⁵⁷ See Steven Feldstein, *The Rise of Digital Repression: How Technology is Reshaping Power, Politics, and Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁵⁸ How TikTok Ate the Internet,” *The Washington Post*,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2022/tiktok-popularity>, October 14, 2022.

It is also likely that history institutions and history communicators who join TikTok today will not experience the same network effects as those who joined earlier. Tech platforms provide early mover advantages; when there are fewer users on a platform, it is easier to reach more people. Now that TikTok has grown to more than 1.4 billion users, growth has become more difficult. Preliminary research has shown that wide reach on TikTok is declining, with fewer accounts reaching massive numbers of followers.⁵⁹ Both the Sacramento History Museum and Kahlil Greene are experiencing significantly less growth now than when they began.

Finally, those who communicate in the public interest must ask themselves if the values of a particular platform align with their values. TikTok's culture is largely anti-authority; its popularity grew when young TikTok users lashed out against their "OK, Boomer" counterparts⁶⁰ or when young TikTok users openly defied COVID-19 lockdowns.⁶¹ Users have gravitated to TikTok for enjoyment, not necessarily education, and because it is easy to use, and offers the promise of virality. It is fueled by the allure of getting rich and famous quickly, not the promise of nuanced critical thinking. TikTok is not predicated on users engaging critically with the world but rather seeing reflected back to them an algorithmically determined collection of their own interests.⁶² These are TikTok's values, and research has shown that the more we use social media, the more its values become our values.⁶³ Are these the values that we want for the history profession? The answer will vary from institution to institution, but we at HCI feel it is important to ask the question.

⁵⁹ Tweet by Matt Navarra (@MattNavarra), Twitter, August 9, 2022, <https://twitter.com/MattNavarra/status/1556952021265260544>.

⁶⁰ "Why are Gen Z and millennials calling out boomers on TikTok? 'OK, boomer,' explained," USA TODAY, published, October 31, 2019, updated November 4, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/10/31/why-gen-z-millennials-using-ok-boomer-baby-boomers/4107782002>.

⁶¹ 98 Million TikTok Followers Can't Be Wrong," The Atlantic, December 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/charli-damelio-tiktok-teens/616929/>.

⁶² Bhandari, A. & Bimo, S. (2020, October). TikTok and the Algorithmized Self: A New Model of Online Interaction. Paper presented at AoIR 2020: The 21th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers. Virtual Event: AoIR. Retrieved from <http://spir.aoir.org>.

⁶³ See History, Disrupted: How Social Media and the World Wide Web Have Changed the Past (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

For institutions and individuals that do wish to use TikTok, the HCI advises the following:

1

Informed consent from staff and volunteers is critical. The risks of using TikTok should be clearly explained, including the collection of biometric data, the potential for addiction, and the potential to encounter hate speech and harassment. Resources for continual training and support must be allocated.

2

TikTok videos are short and fast-paced, often referencing existing trends on the platform. History communicators will need to be familiar with these trends in order to use the platform successfully. This requires time and commitment that must be accounted for as part of the workload. Institutions can choose to hire creators who already have experience with the platform to help them create content. Such creators should be compensated fairly for the amount of work required.

3

TikTok success tends to coincide with frequent usage of the platform. This can mean posting videos each day, perhaps even several times per day. Management of TikTok, along with other social media platforms, can easily become a full-time history communication job within an institution, or a full-time job for an independent history communicator. It can also become addictive. Institutions and individuals must consider the trade-offs between a desire for relevance and new audience with safeguarding well-being and privacy.

4

The larger effect of TikTok has been to push social media and content creation further in the direction of short-form video. Content creation from history institutions and history communicators will have to adapt to what the platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube privilege and how the algorithms are evolving. This will require new funding, new training, new equipment, new departments, new staff, new research and an evolution in the field of public history. Such is one purpose of the History Communication Institute; to discuss further, please contact us at hci@historycommunication.com.

Need for further research and funding

More funding and research are needed to understand the effects of TikTok on public history and historical learning. Currently it is difficult to conduct thorough empirical research, especially since TikTok does not make an API available for researchers. How is history consumed on the platform? Do users recognize history when they see it? Do the opportunities outweigh costs? What are the effects on already marginalized populations? What are the effects of AI and ML-driven recommendation engines on the consumption and production of history-related content? Do we reproduce our hopes for history's relevance with each new medium—or is TikTok really offering something unique for history students and history funding? Further research is needed to answer these questions.

Conclusion

The HCI believes that TikTok does not currently meet the standard of an ethical social media platform. One might argue that no social media platform meets that standard; there is merit to that position. Instagram, for example, collects as much—or more—data than TikTok. But among the major platforms, TikTok holds a dubious record.

TikTok has:

- Purposefully targeted young women and girls;
- Developed a highly addictive AI-powered algorithm;
- Numerous privacy and security red flags;
- Collected massive amounts of data to be used for an unknown purpose;
- Shared information with a government accused of massive human rights violations and currently employing a network of mass surveillance;
- Censored marginalized communities and topics of historical importance;
- Perpetuated a value system that is at odds with the values of professional history.

As ByteDance evolves as a company its priorities and practices might change, and so, too, might our assessment. There have been rumors of a ByteDance IPO in the United States; more regulation and regular SEC filings could make the company more forthcoming and honest in its business practices.

TikTok Alternatives

History institutions and history communicators seeking to engage with younger audiences can also consider the following:

- Snapchat – Millions of teenagers and young adults use Snapchat as a primary social media platform. Many established brands and institutions have Snapchat accounts, including major publishers. Snap is also based in the United States, which while not as strict in data protections as Europe, is a publicly-traded company with public filings and more transparency.
- Gaming – Hundreds of millions of teenagers and young adults play games, primarily video games but also board and role-playing games. While the video game industry has its own problematic elements, using games as a means to connect with younger audiences has shown some promise in the classroom and online.
- Schools – Millions of students attend schools each year, and those schools, teachers and curriculum developers remain excellent partners in reaching students. Instead of devoting resources to social media, resources could be devoted to fostering deeper connections with local and regional schools, inspiring students to take a break from their phones and engage with the histories around them.

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