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The Form of Content Personalisation at Mainstream Transatlantic News Outlets: 2010–2016



Your recently viewed items and featured recommendations

Inspired by your browsing history





Top 10 Los Angeles
(Eyewitness Top 10...
Andrea...
★★★★☆ 41
Paperback
\$11.28 ✓Prime



Frommer's San Diego day by day
Maribeth Mellin
★★★★★ 1
Paperback
\$9.30 ✓Prime



Fodor's San Diego: with North County...
Fodor's Travel Guides
★★★★☆ 20
Paperback
\$13.76 ✓Prime



Streetwise San Diego Map - Laminated City Center
Street Map of San...
Streetwise Maps
★★★★☆ 40
Map

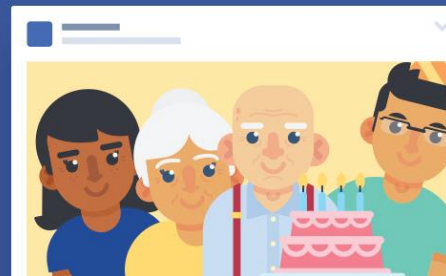


50 Best Short Hikes San Diego
Jerry Schad
★★★★☆ 15
Paperback
\$15.43 ✓Prime

You
viewed

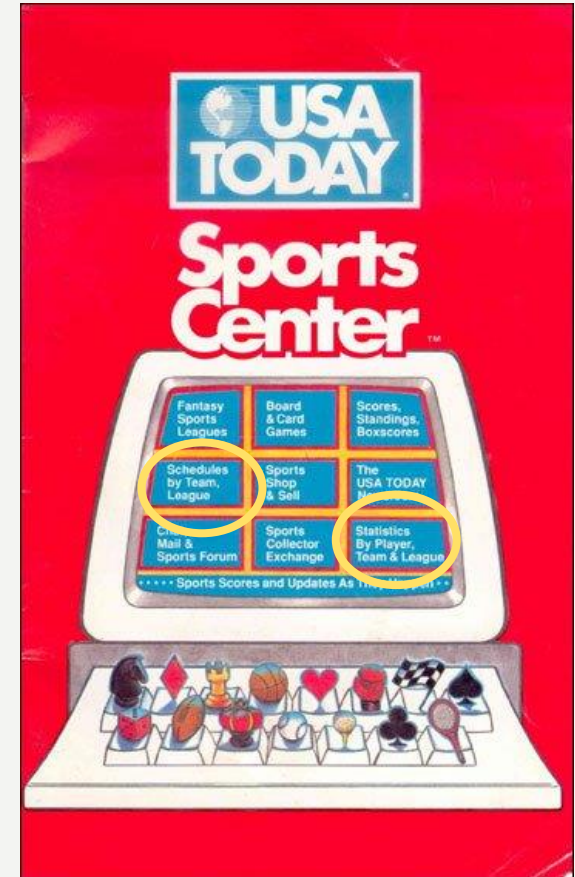
Welcome to News Feed

Our goal with News Feed is to show you the stories that matter most to you every time you visit Facebook.



- “The Daily Me” (Negroponte 1995)
➔ completely personalised newspaper
- We’re not quite there, but...

1989



Artificial Intelligence and Robotics

Recent articles

- › The risks of relying on robots for fairer staff recruitment
- › Driverless cars to display road etiquette with emojis
- › Synthesised speech deserves recognition
- › nuTonomy looks to beat Uber at its own game

✓ Following

Special interests



Beauty
Weekly

+ Add

Stay up-to-date with the hottest trends, tips and news, direct from our experts - every Monday.

View Sample



Bespoke Events
Ad-hoc

+ Add

Discover unforgettable and once-in-a-lifetime experiences created exclusively for Telegraph audiences.

View Sample



Cars
Weekly

+ Add

Motoring news, reviews, tips and advice from our expert columnists - every Tuesday.

View Sample

Essex >



Council orders kids' den destruction

31 August 2016 Essex



Teens arrested over 'hate crime murder'

31 August 2016 Essex



Murder probe after attacked man dies

30 August 2016 Essex

From other local news sites

About these results

Man wanted in prison after breaking assault bail conditions

East London & West Essex Guardian Series

Harlow woman to ride 230 miles to Paris for Diabetes UK

Harlow Star

Forget London - Tendring is the most popular place to move to in the UK

Braintree & Witham Times

Ten things to do in Essex this weekend, September 3 and 4: Wine...

Essex Chronicle

Hula hooping fitness classes set to start in Sible Hedingham

Halstead Gazette

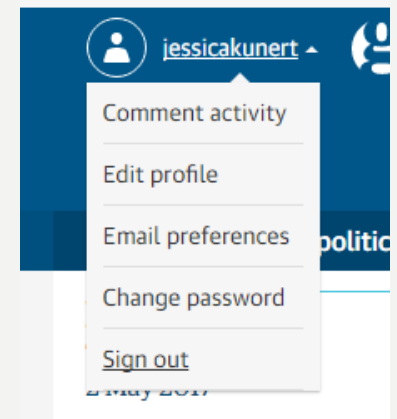
Vandals try to break into car

Halstead Gazette

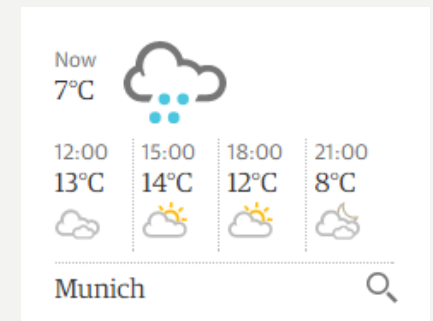
What is personalisation?

“A form of user-to-system interactivity that uses a set of technological features to adapt the content, delivery, and arrangement of a communication to individual users’ **explicitly** and/or **implicitly** determined preferences.” (Thurman/Schifferes 2012)

Explicit: users input preferences



Implicit: infers preferences from data collected



Challenges

- **Inaccurate profiles** (Gauch et al. 2007; Sela et al. 2015)
 - ➔ getting outdated over time
 - ➔ multiple users on the same account
 - ➔ “do I really say that I want news on Kim Kardashian?”
- **Privacy & retaining control** (Diakopoulos/Koliska 2016)
 - ➔ what gets tracked, when and how?
 - ➔ need to ensure “algorithmic accountability”
- **Filter bubble** (Pariser 2011; Sunstein 2001)
 - ➔ a threat to serendipity (?)



Why is personalisation of interest to news outlets?

- Cater to diverse audiences
- Re-use older items that might still be relevant
- Targeted advertising

- Content analysis of news websites and mobile news apps
- UK, US, and German outlets, n=15
- Coding from September to October 2016
- Variables: explicit and implicit personalisation features
- Interviews with representatives in charge of personalisation of four of the outlets



theguardian THE  TIMES
The Telegraph sky NEWS
Mirror THE Sun FT
FINANCIAL
TIMES

BBC
NEWS

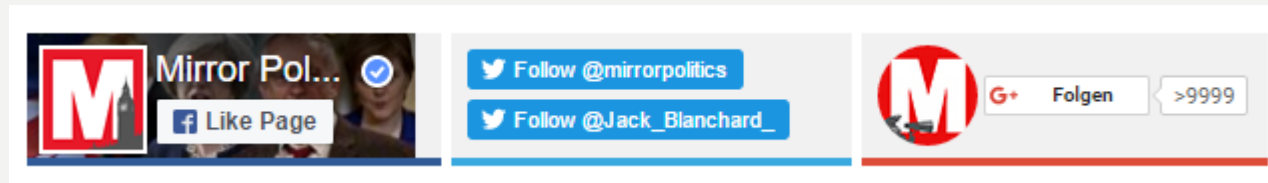
The New York Times The Washington Post
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Süddeutsche Zeitung
Handelsblatt tagesschau 

Bild

Profound change since 2010

- RSS feeds – mostly gone! → “too techy”
→ move to social media as one’s personal newsfeed

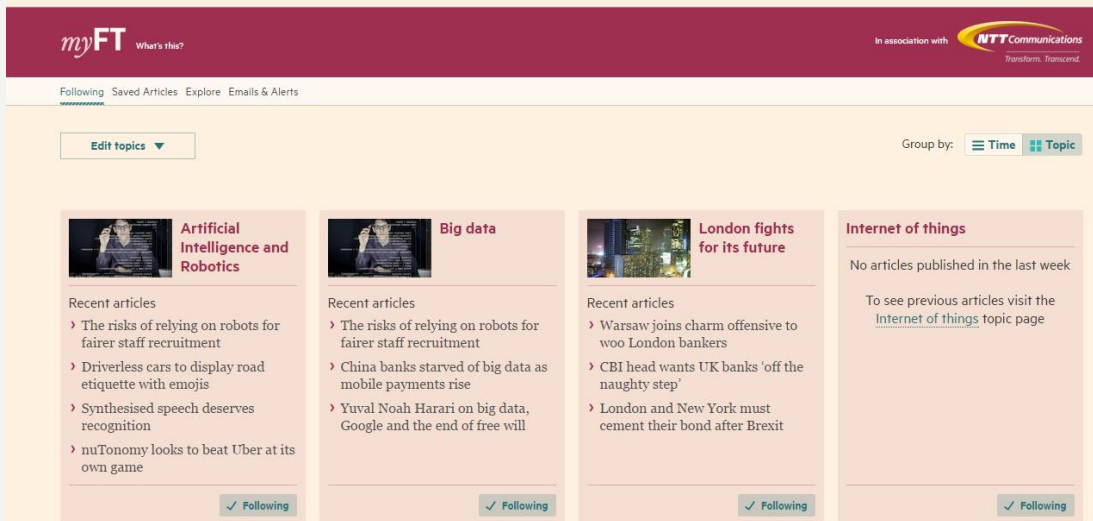


- Homepage customisation – stable! (more in mobile)
- Geo-targeted editions – rare, mostly hyperlinks to other editions!



Profound change since 2010

- One-to-one & social collaborative filtering – gone!
➔ did rarely work; privacy issues
- My Pages – mostly gone!
Some sophisticated exceptions!



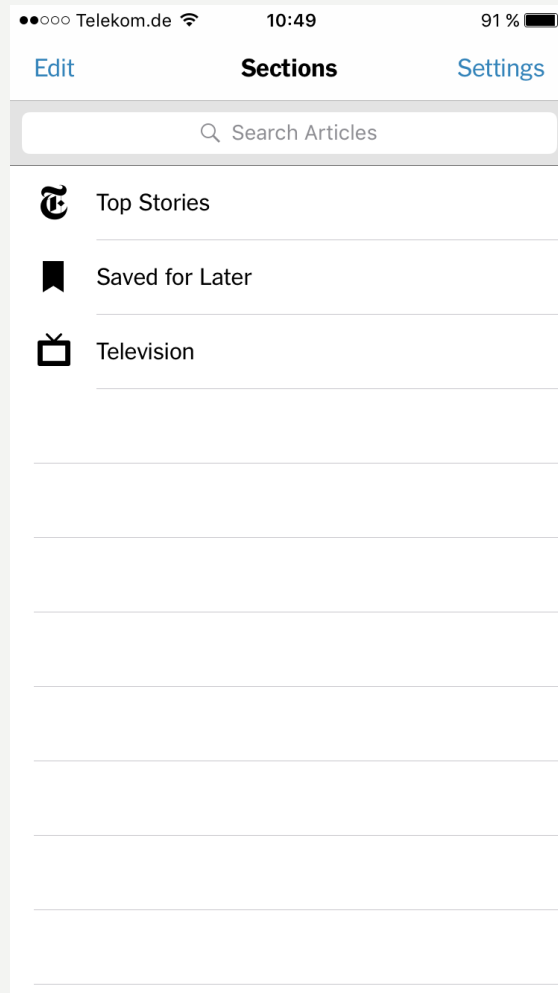
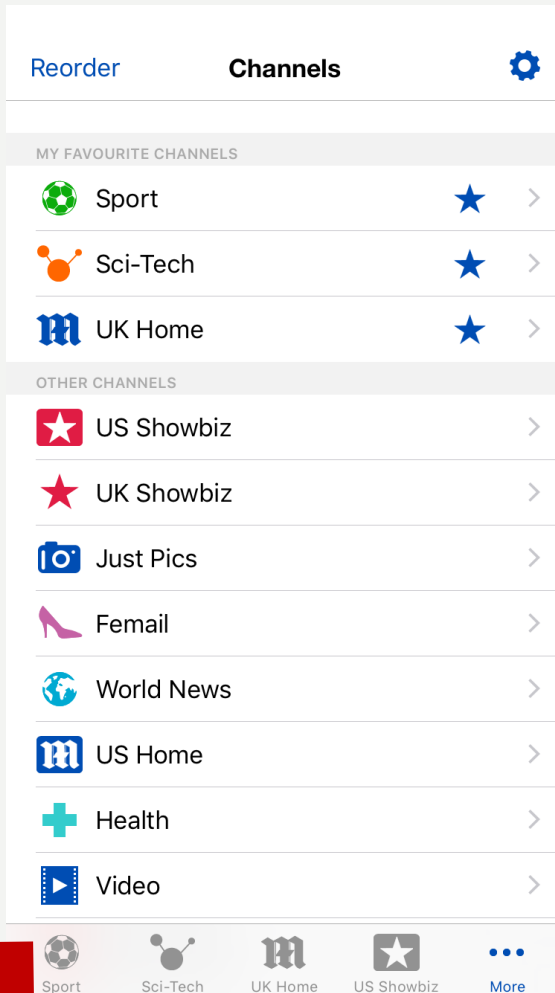
The screenshot shows the myFT website interface. At the top, there is a purple header with the myFT logo and the text "What's this?". Below the header, there is a navigation bar with links: "Following", "Saved Articles", "Explore", "Emails & Alerts". The main content area is divided into four columns, each representing a different topic. Each column has a title, a small image, and a list of recent articles. The topics are: "Artificial Intelligence and Robotics", "Big data", "London fights for its future", and "Internet of things". Each column also has a "Following" button at the bottom.



The screenshot shows a Facebook profile page for Leah Singer. The profile picture is a small square image of a woman. The name "Hi, Leah Singer" is displayed. Below the name is a section titled "FRIENDS' ACTIVITY". There are three activity items listed: 1. "Keirsun Scott recommended How Facebook won the web · about an hour ago". 2. "Navy SEAL not guilty of charges in Iraq" with a subtext "1023 people shared this.". 3. "NASA unveils new images of the sun" with a subtext "9539 people shared this.".

The move to mobile

- New with mobile: engagement with news on public transport and in other places where media were either unavailable or a hassle to use
- ➔ “[Our] app users are the most loyal and the most engaged” (BBC News, personal communication)
- Breaking news push notifications (app or WhatsApp)
 - ➔ segmenting news:
What to send to whom?
What is special interest, and what isn’t?





- Users as the news gatekeepers...
- ... or are they missing out?
- **Possible remedies**
 - “Top Stories”
 - “Users really want the FT view” (FT personal communication)
 - “Hey Doris!”



- **It's not personalisation itself, it's the implementation**

- ➔ transparency for the user: how is they data used?
- ➔ don't ask too much when setting up profiles
- ➔ keep the "outlet's view"

"If you don't look at personalisation,
you're probably handicapped."
(BBC News, personal communication)