DIGITAL PLATFORM TRANSPARENCY: A TIMELINE

**NOVEMBER 2016**
Russia’s use of social media to influence U.S. elections catalyzes research on misinformation and platform accountability in the United States.

**PROPUBLICA**

**NOVEMBER 2017**
Propublica launches Political Ad Collector to gather and scrutinize political ads on Facebook.

**APRIL 2018**
Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before three committees of the U.S. House and Senate.

**MAY 2018**
Facebook launches Ad Library, which offers access to limited data about political ads that run on the platform.

**C4D Ad Observatory**

**SEPTEMBER 2020**
C4D launches Ad Observatory, a platform that analyzes data from Ad Observer, Facebook Ad Library, and other sources and shares trends with the public.

**JULY 2020**
C4D launches Ad Observer, a 2.0 version of Political Ad Collector that allows Facebook users to share data about the ads they see.

**JULY 2019**
C4D publishes a security analysis exposing weaknesses of Facebook Ad Library.

**OCTOBER 2019**
Experts at the Electronic Freedom Foundation and elsewhere disapprove of Facebook’s claims.

**OCTOBER 2020**
Seeing the need for full transparency into online political advertising given its outsized influence on democracy, C4D and other researchers call for Universal Digital Ad Transparency.

**OCTOBER 2020**
Facebook responds by sending a cease & desist letter to C4D that calls for disabling Ad Observer, citing violations of its terms of service.

**OCTOBER 2020**
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C4D launches Ad Observatory, a platform that analyzes data from Ad Observer, Facebook Ad Library, and other sources and shares trends with the public.

**AUGUST 2021**
The U.S. FTC sends a letter to Facebook stating that its claims that C4D’s research violates its consent decree are inaccurate.

**AUGUST 2021**
C4D publishes New York Times op ed about losing Facebook data access.

**DECEMBER 2021**
C4D and Belgium’s KU Leuven expose Facebook’s poor performance in identifying political ads in “An Audit of Facebook’s Political Ad Policy Enforcement.”

**DECEMBER 2021**
C4D and partners release "A Standard for Universal Ad Transparency" published by Knight First Amendment Institute, which describes in detail how this policy proposal would work.

**JANUARY 2022**
Knight Institute publishes "A Safe Harbor for Platform Research", a policy proposal that establishes legal protections for researchers and journalists that study Facebook and other platforms.

For more information about Cybersecurity for Democracy at NYU visit cybersecurityfordemocracy.org