

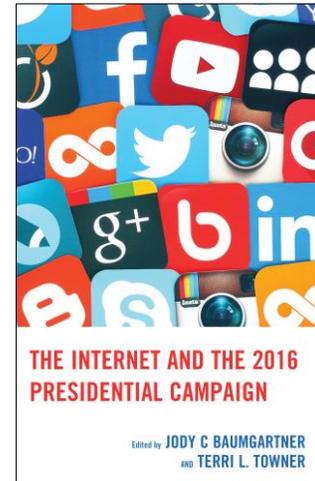
Jody C. Baumgartner and Terri L. Towner (Eds.), **The Internet and the 2016 Presidential Campaign**, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017, 384 pp., \$120 (hardcover), \$44.99 (paperback).

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The election of Donald Trump as the U.S. president was a surprise in 2016. The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the president of Iran was perhaps a similar surprise in 2005. A common reason for the victories of both presidents was a turn of the people toward populism. In both countries, significant numbers of people turned to candidates who symbolized anti-elitism. However, a difference in the two cases is the role of the Internet. The Internet had fewer users and social networks in 2005 compared with 2016. Analysis of Internet use by traditional media, campaigns, candidates, and citizens during the 2016 election is the fascinating topic of ***The Internet and the 2016 Presidential Campaign***. The influence of the Internet in the election is also a controversial and complicated issue, as editors Jody C. Baumgartner and Terri L. Towner argue in the preface. The traditional media were the most common source of election news in both 2008 (77%) and 2016 (78%). However, in 2016, Americans learned “more about elections from online sources (65%)” (p. xvii) than in the past. If the use of traditional media has not changed dramatically over time, why did people inform themselves so significantly by using new media? Does the Internet set the agenda for traditional media, campaigns, or candidates? Or vice versa? This book strives to answer these questions. Although the cover is not eye-catching, it presents the icons of social networks, the book’s content deals with remarkable issues like gender, balance of power, and agenda building on Twitter and Instagram in presidential and congressional elections as well as gubernatorial elections in 2016. The authors of the book’s chapters applied mostly quantitative methods (surveys, content analysis of social media posts, electronic data collection).



The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 consists of six chapters that consider Internet use for campaign messaging by the candidates to communicate with and inform voters. In chapter 1, James N. Druckmann, Martin J. Kiefer, and Michael Parkin give an interesting analysis of congressional campaign websites. The websites focused on increasing information about candidates rather than coordinating with volunteers or voters. The nonincumbent campaigns focused on expressing negative aspects about the incumbent rather than increasing awareness about their own candidates. The congressional campaigns had to make difficult choices about whether to associate themselves with the campaign of Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. Trump’s partisans distanced themselves from him because of his “controversial campaign style.” However, Clinton’s “historic candidacy” and “popularity” encouraged campaigns to show more association with her on their websites (p. 17).

The broad adoption of Twitter by candidates for the Senate and the House of Representatives is investigated in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Chapter 2 notes that although Americans use Facebook much more than Twitter (68% vs. 21%), 80% to 90% of Democrat and Republican candidates used Twitter. Chapter 3

presents an analysis showing that the first focus of candidates' tweets was to inform the public. Chapter 4 illustrates that candidates used Twitter more than Facebook or Instagram.

In chapter 5, Heather K. Evans, Kayla J. Brown, and Tiffany Wimberly explore the role of gender in the 2016 presidential race. Hillary Clinton "was more active on Twitter than Trump" during the campaign and "far more likely to discuss policies and voice her position on policy issues than was Trump" (p. 120). She did not just mention problems as a "political statement," but also declared what she would do to solve the problem as the next president. She also tweeted three times more often than Trump on "women issues" (e.g., health and equal rights). Moreover, "Clinton posted more negative messages about Trump than he posted about her" (p. 120). The researchers' open questions for future research include whether results of the study have to do with gender or with Hillary Clinton being a Democrat. Christine B. Williams and Girish J. "Jeff" Gulati investigate the issue of digital advertising in chapter 6. Their results show that outside groups spent much more on digital media in 2016 than 2012. They also concluded that outside groups favoring Republicans spent more money on digital advertising than outside groups favoring Democrats.

Part 2 includes four chapters that explore how Internet news is produced and consumed and affects voters and campaigners. According to Diana Owen in chapter 7, a considerable number of online users were monitoring and seeking campaign information through social media. They used social media to express themselves and to react to politicians in real-life dialogue. There is also synergy between social media use and offline campaign engagement (e.g., talking about the election with a family member; p. 169).

David S. Morris starts his discussion in chapter 8 with the point that during the 2016 presidential election, 90% of Americans informed themselves through both traditional and social media. In this way, social media became as important as traditional media for Americans in 2016. According to his study, citizens believed and agreed with political information from Twitter as much as *USA Today*. In his view, a reason for Trump's victory is the "changing role of the mediated traditional and social media platforms" (p. 195). However, Peter L. Francia analyzes the victory of Trump from another point of view in chapter 9. Trump did not have the organization and systematic campaign that Clinton did, but he attracted the most attention with his controversial public statements on the Internet. He "estimated \$4.96 billion in free media coverage over the final twelve months of the 2016 election" which "was considerably more than Hillary Clinton's free media value total at \$3.24 billion" (p. 204). This was a win for Trump, especially when one considers that his campaign started with one of the smallest budgets compared with other (even Republican) candidates (p. 201). In chapter 10, Baumgartner focuses on political humor and its evaluation on the Internet. This analysis of YouTube videos from late-night television talk shows illustrates that Clinton was targeted mostly about the e-mail scandal while Trump was targeted about his use of Twitter and his tax returns (p. 234).

Part 3 includes three chapters focused on the relationship between the parties' issues and agenda setting. Parties normally "acquire a reputation for handling certain issues due to marked concern and policy success. Over time, voters have come to associate each party with particular issues and expect issue emphasis within campaign media with these expectations" (p. 242). Chapter 11 suggests that the parties' owned issues set the candidates' agendas on Twitter. Daily newspapers predicted the Twitter posts of the candidates. But in some cases, such as Clinton's e-mails, newspaper agendas were set by Twitter posts rather than parties' issues. The use of Instagram by the nominees and its impact on the traditional media

agenda is investigated in chapters 12 and 13. Chapter 13 more specifically analyzes Clinton's posts on Instagram and finds that her posts predicted the agenda in mainstream newspapers. Chapter 13 concludes that Clinton was the most established candidate in the field, and the traditional media would mostly follow her social media posts.

The book offers rich investigations of diverse aspects of Internet use in the 2016 election. However, some chapters end with short and superficial conclusions. Furthermore, the editors' proofreading and content editing of the book could have been done better. For instance, Mechanical Turk is introduced two times, in chapter 7 (p. 158) and chapter 8 (p. 184). The term *agenda setting* is first used in chapter 11 without definition, but it is defined in detail in chapter 12. The title of part 3, "Political Issues on Twitter and Instagram," overlaps with some chapters in parts 1 and 2 that investigate "political issues" on "Twitter" and "Instagram." In addition, chapters in part 3 are focused on the relationship between the agenda of the candidates on social media and the agenda of traditional media. Terms like *agenda building* or *agenda setting* could fit more with the title of part 3.

The book could benefit from a conclusion at the end to relate various aspects of Internet use to the recent changes in American society. The Internet helped Trump win in many ways. Trump had advantages like free advertising and the highest free media value (chapter 9). But Clinton was not inactive on the Internet. Indeed, she tweeted during the 2016 election more than Trump (chapter 5), and her statements on social media set the agenda for traditional media more than those of Trump (chapter 12). So why did the Internet help Trump more than Clinton? There are at least three answers to this question. First, the interference of Russia in the 2016 election through social media and Internet trolls (Bazan et al., 2017) is significant. Second, Clinton's campaign did not use the Internet to consider the challenging issues (e.g., e-mails). According to the inoculation theory (McGuire, 1961), her campaign could concentrate on weak counterarguments regarding the challenging issues to bring into play her advocates' desires facing those issues. But Trump used the Internet effectively by accusing the mainstream media of favoring Clinton and being just "fake news." Indeed, he secured himself against his challenging issues (e.g., sexually assaulting women). He convinced his advocates that to know the "truth", they should follow Trump's own tweets. Third, the Internet helped Trump because he has been a great populist leader/actor. According to Benjamin Moffitt (2016), the world faces a global rise of populism, and "new media has opened up many performative opportunities for populist actors" (p. 88). But populism has two faces, actor and citizen, and availability of just the former is not enough. For instance, in 2016, Ahmadinejad (former Iranian populist president) considered being a presidential candidate again. He was rejected by the Iranian hardliners, but he actually made strong efforts through social media to mobilize Iranians in his favor. Ultimately, he failed. A reason for this failure is that Iranian society's interest in populism was not as great in 2016 as in 2005. The Internet could help Trump because of the populist dynamics of the American society in 2016. Reading the analyses of Vance (2018) and McQuarrie (2017) is recommended to understand what American society has gone through.

Despite the minor omissions mentioned above, this book provides rich analysis of the relationship between the new media and the 2016 election. It is recommended to those who have an interest in media studies and political and social science.

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