(Julia Walch, Math and TOK Teacher, Munich International School, feel free to contact me at jwalch@mis-munich.de)
Hello, I am a teacher at MIS and I created this exhibition to show my students. My team has read it and it scored a 9-10, but please feel free to score otherwise with your students/use however you wish. I hope it is helpful. Julia.

IA PROMPT #10: What Challenges are Raised by Dissemination and/or Communication of Knowledge?

Theme: Knowledge and the Knower

Object #1: Speaker's Corner in Toronto
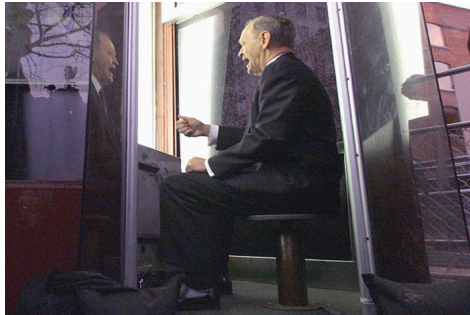
Box populi: Prime Minster Jean Chrétien rallies his base on Speakers Corner. (Courtesy of the Toronto Star)

Real-world context

Speaker's Corner was a booth in Toronto, Canada from the 1980s until early 2000s, where by paying $1, a person could speak their mind for 2 minutes on any issue – politics, love, complaints about the city, etc. Recordings were then selected by CityTV, Toronto's news network, and compiled to be broadcast every Saturday afternoon. As seen in the photo above, even our former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien stopped by to address his support base. The booth was closed in 2008 due to the decrease in "modern relevance" (Conroy) as digital means of communication such as YouTube became the replacing platform.

Link to the Prompt

In retrospect, it was an advantage for the viewer to not being able to control the content or the topics of the show; by choosing to watch, the viewer was inherently exposed to multiple perspectives on diverse issues. This allowed for, if not for evaluation of different points of view on issues, at least an awareness of them. Speaker's Corner faced its own communication challenges – firstly, it reached a limited community – knowledge was disseminated to those that watched the show. Further, not all participants' clips were selected, raising the issue of selectivity – while still pre-algorithmic to the selection of information we are exposed to today, there *was* someone on the other end choosing what the viewer would be exposed to.

Justification of object contribution

I chose this predecessor to online communication because it highlights the change in the challenges communication media shift and end-users gain agency – we now have to actively seek out different points of view, whereas CityTV did this for the viewer. This poses an interesting paradox – with less outlets, the diversity of knowledge at hand was actually greater, whereas today, with more points of views communicated than ever, the dissemination is much more restricted, with the digital media model designed to expose viewers to one set of points of views.

Object #2: "The Covid-19 Vaccine"

Real-world context
My second object is the Covid-19 Vaccine, the long-awaited cure to the world pandemic at hand. The object does not need much contextual explanation, other than that after a year, and over 100 million cases of the virus worldwide, vaccines such as that from Biontech as in the image above are slowly becoming available. The vaccine is the primary defense and deterrent against the virus.

Link to the Prompt
The vaccine highlights challenges of knowledge dissemination by medical experts and political authorities. Disseminating, rather than communicating knowledge, implies a more wide-spread and more one-directional interaction, and the feedback from the general public is not sought. (Admin) Though accepting this information is possibly life-saving for the end-user, there has been fear and distrust among those whose (often online) communities disseminate doubt of its safety. The high-stakes medical validity of this object juxtaposed against the strength of personal/community beliefs in the face of evidence highlights the challenges of information transfer to user knowledge. The challenges are exacerbated by the echo chambers that strengthen the beliefs of those communities' members. Filter bubbles offer further confirmation bias against which conflicting knowledge does not stand, regardless of sound evidence.

Justification of object contribution
This object highlights the challenges of knowledge dissemination of experts to the public. The strengths of personal beliefs - our tendencies to accept knowledge that agrees with our beliefs and ignore conflicting information (Vedantam) makes it difficult for the vaccine to be accepted by all. Further, the false knowledge dissemination cannot be pulled back, and as the false claims accumulate, people feel more validated in rejecting the vaccine, exacerbating the challenge of the prompt.

Object #3: "Pepe the Frog" Meme

My third object is a meme called Pepe the Frog that originated in a 2005 comic by Matt Furie called Boy's Club. (Khan) The frog-head-and-human-body character became a popular meme to express humour, emotions and opinions. Memes are a popular way to capture cultural and sub-cultural trends, though the meaning of the joke is sometimes restricted to particular communities of knowers. Because of the light nature of memes combined with normality of not understanding them fully, the online community did not seem to notice the shift of Pepe toward right-wing politics as it was appropriated by those groups and after a couple of years, "…what seemed to be fun and funny ended up functioning as a Trojan horse for white-supremacist, violent ideologies to shuffle through the gates and not be recognized." (Lewis) By 2010, Pepe was added to the Anti-Defamation League's database of hate symbols, with the creator describing that "the experience of having his copyrighted creation appropriate as a hate symbol had been a "nightmare"". (Hunt)

Links to the Prompt
Pepe the Frog shows that one of the challenges raised in knowledge dissemination is understanding the perspectives and the purpose of the source. Pepe's gradual transition to becoming a symbol of hateful knowledge production done through humourous, ironic means was purposeful, partly to draw in possible future members to these communities and partially to evade responsibility. (Sanders) This highlights knowledge dissemination not being synonymous with communication, as on the users' end, the intentions were not fully understood, particularly as the meme changed hands. The challenge here lies in understanding such multi-layered communication of knowledge.

Justification of object's contribution to the exhibition
I chose this object because although a clear limitation of a meme is that it isn't a communication means by experts, it firstly demonstrates the challenges raised by end-users' ability to modify the tool of communication and therefore the knowledge imparted, and secondly, the complexity of quick and subtle changes of sub-cultures and the consequences this has for dissemination of knowledge.

Through these three objects, I aimed to examine the multitude of challenges probed by the prompt – the communication and dissemination challenges framed by the changes in the digital tools, those of expert knowledge dissemination, the might of selection bias on the knowledge acquirer's end and the subtleties of understanding cultural and sub-cultural knowledge communication.

Bibliography:

Object 1:

Conroy, Ed. "The History of Speakers Corner in Toronto." *BlogTO*, BlogTO, 29 Nov. 2020, www.blogto.com/city/2020/11/speakers-corner-toronto/.

Object 2:

Admin. "Communication vs. Dissemination: What's the Difference?" *Leitat's Projects Blog*, 11 June 2020, projects.leitat.org/communication-vs-dissemination-whats-the-difference/.

Vedantham, Shankar. "Facts Aren't Enough: The Psychology Of False Beliefs." *NPR*, NPR, 22 July 2019, www.npr.org/transcripts/743195213?t=1611738222470.

Object 3:

Bradley, Rachel. "The Original Memes (Before Memes)." *Dictionary.com*, Dictionary.com, 19 Jan. 2021, www.dictionary.com/e/the-original-memes-before-memes-listicle/.

Elle, Hunt. "Pepe the Frog Creator Kills off Internet Meme Co-Opted by White Supremacists." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 8 May 2017.

Khan, Imad. "The Story behind 4chan's Pepe the Frog Meme." *The Daily Dot*, 27 Jan. 2021, www.dailydot.com/unclick/4chan-pepe-the-frog-renaissance/.

Lewis, Helen. "The Joke's on Us." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 5 Oct. 2020, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/09/how-memes-lulz-and-ironic-bigotry-won-internet/616427/.

Sanders, Sam, et al. "White Supremacy And Its Online Reach." *NPR It's Been a Minute*, NPR, 10 Nov. 2020, www.npr.org/2020/11/04/931527391/white-supremacy-and-its-online-reach.

NOTE: after our team marking, the main feedback for improvement is that the second object, (the covid vaccine), is a little general and does not convey the controversy discussed – a better object would have been a poster from anti-corona demonstration where the object would portray the challenge of the prompt before this was even explained.