Big Data, Ethics, and the Social Implications of Knowledge Production

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KDD@Bloomberg Data Ethics workshop, 24th August 2014

'big data'

the advance of knowledge via a leap in scale and scope in relation to a given object or phenomenon

big data: what's new for ethics?

major new questions revolving around free will and a loss of human agency:

o new domains of action and knowledge
o new accuracy in pinpointing individuals (haystack)
o new actors and new tools

three case studies

o driverless cars
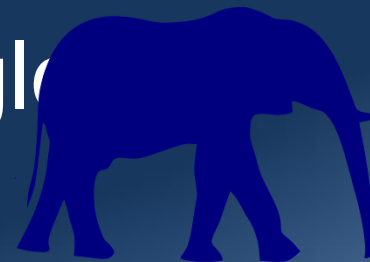
   engineering illegality

o voting and emotion on facebook

   how to use friends to influence people

o result removal on google

   not gone, just forgotten

case study conclusions

- phenomena that we are used to offline creep us out online
- backlash arrives in bursts, focused on most popular platforms
- lines between academia, business and government increasingly blurred

… but academia and business are different:

o broad/abstract vs narrow/focused

o explanatory vs instrumental

o social actors vs consumers/voters/'users'

wider perspectives

- the lmic perspective
- data subordination
- orwell or huxley?

troubleshooting

o public good provision

o IRBs

o update federal rules for modern era

o opt-in

o post-hoc

thanks!