Best 20 Issues and Pull Requests of Twitter/the-algorithm Github Repo

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Abstract

There were many noble intentions regarding the decision to make the twitter algorithm open source. Though the move was intended to provide transparency to the public, it had a very different and wonderful outcome, attracting trolls with a software background the outlet to make funny pull requests and issues. In this blog post formatted as a paper to stick to my own format, I will highlight some of my favorite PRs and Issues.

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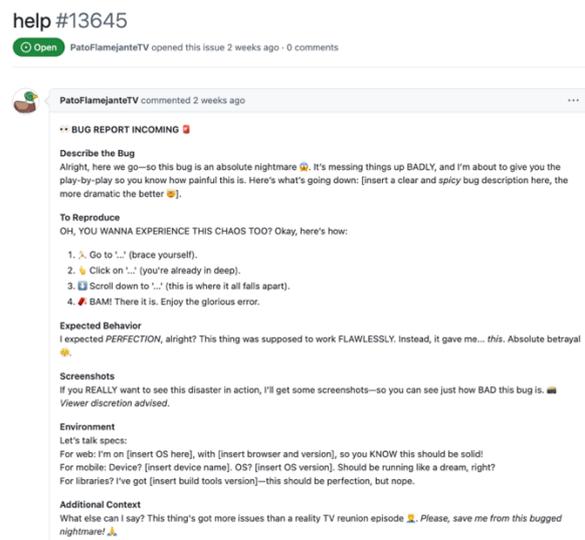
1. Introduction

While twitter has become one of the corner stones of the social media landscape despite what everyone on BlueSky is saying, its code repository has become the epitome of the old internet forums of yesteryear. Scrolling through the closed and open issues and PRs, you can gander at the 90% useful and boring content and find the uniquely funny content made by and for coders. A collogue and myself recently recorded a video discovering some of the greatest here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaYfI7n5AqI. We could have done another hour there were so many great gems and some interesting suggestions.

2. Top Issues

There were a lot of 'delete twitters' but some amazing ones. These required a little less effort than the Pull Requests but were still interesting to look through.

2.1 Help

A more recent and a little tamer issue 'Help' (located here https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/13645) is a meta comment on issues themselves complete with over expressive emoji's. Using the format *Describe the Bug*, *To Reproduce*, *Expected Behavior*, *Screenshots*, *Environment*, and *Additional Content*, the 'Ultimate Quack' PatoFlfamejaneTV warns coders "Alright, here we go—so this bug is an absolute nightmare 😱. It's messing things up BADLY, and I'm about to give you the play-by-play so you know how painful this is. Here's what's going down: [insert a clear and spicy bug description here, the more dramatic the better 🤯]." It's a good read.

2.2 你们这些代码根本看不懂，能不能多来点注释啊，再来个简化版，这样都根本没人用的，别人用你们的开源比别人自己开发都难了

This user copy-pasted the suggested format for an issue and then wrote in "I can't understand your code at all. Can you please add more comments and a simplified version? No one will use it at all. It will be more difficult for others to use your open source than to develop it themselves," in Chinese. I like this one because, you just have to google translate the title. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/2078

2.3 🥵 badge for climate change deniers (just like you highlight government sponsored propaganda)

I don't think this is an ironic comment. Back before twitter began to take a more right-wing crispy flavor, one user requested we begin labeling climate deniers. I do wonder what would put someone on that list, maybe just asking questions? I'm sure if someone ever implemented the idea climate deniers would wear the badge with pride. I'm personally in favor of r/PoliticalCompassMeme style political flairs. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/1863

2.4 Determine shadow ban status

Going for the throat, this user wants to know why their tweets aren't doing well. It seems like it would be a good idea to know your shadow ban status…until you realize what bots would do with that information. If I were a state actor and wanted an army of influential twitter bots, I'd optimize their behavior on said shadow ban status Captcha's be damned. It brought out the free speech users who railed against the system by suggesting to remove many offensive content detectors and increase the max offensive terms number from 2 to 3 in a PR. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/490

2.5 Veritas Network - Determining misinformation likelihood via allowing users to bet on future tweet factuality

Yet another unironic and wild suggestion, in order to tackle misinformation dclipca asks to allow users to bet on truth. Get in on this one Nate Silver, this user asks for a polymarket on what is true and untrue. Now there's no suggestion of using money but betting on your own influence on twitter to vote on truthfulness, as in, if you're correct most of the time, your vote starts to matter more. It's almost like the setup to the Community episode Meow Meow Beans which parodies Logans run with a weighted social ranking app. This would be a wild one to see. I personally would love to see this one happen not because it would be good for humanity but because

the result would be nuts. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/1354

2.6 Remove Elon Musk

Another Issue I would get behind. Follow through on the 2023 poll asking whether or not to remove Elon and do it. This is not the first closed issue but the second on the request. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/1739

2.7 Algorithm includes scala hierarchy for political bias

So according to this scala hierarchy in the code, everyone on twitter is labeled a *power user* a *democrat, republican,* or *Elon*. Yup, that's what everyone boils down to. Many users found the actual source code for the politically biased twitter echo chamber. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/121. There have been PR's attempting to remove this feature but unfortunately for the many different issues, they have all been closed. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/179

2.8 make sex update

Getting back to some absolute gems in the issues *makes sex update*. Really gets after an often-overlooked function of twitter, looking at porn! I mean, just read this one and read the comment from our old friend PatoFlamejanteTV. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/13489

2.9 The new X button doesn't close the website

Brilliant issue popping up shortly after the brand change from twitter to X, *grumpycoderpt* rightly points out that the X button is not a button and does not exit out of the program. Obviously an overlooked issue with the name change. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/1876

2.10 this is my cat (most commented issue)

Saving the best for last, this is clearly the best issue on the twitter github. Not to be confused with another great issue *why is my cat not on the frontpage of twitter* (https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/13506) the issue *this is my cat* goes another step further and just posts a pic of their gorgeous orange tabby. I may be biased because I have my own orange tabby, but it is the most highly commented issue on the github repo with everyone finding a moment to post pics of their own cat. It's like a forum from the old internet and loads as slow as the old internet. Evidentally, github is not optimized like most social media pages to quickly load up https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/issues/474

3. Top Pull Requests

Moving to some more elaborate internet trollsmanship, these PR's on the twitter algorithm are equally high effort and

3.1 Xification the algorithm code

Following the brand name change from twitter to X, this pr reminded the developers they should completely commit to the change. Throughout the entire code base, he find-replaced every 'twitter' or 'tweet' with 'X'. I'm sure that didn't cause any variabel name issues whatsoever. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1884/files

3.2 Fixed it

The most common pull request we found was just deleting all the files. We had to include the one labeled *fixed it* but there were many claiming it would stop the spread of misinformation among other advantages of a world without twitter. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/114

3.3 Correct improper promotion of low quality content

In order to stop the promotion of low-quality content, this coder found the blue verification code and edited the scale factor to zero. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1862/files

3.4 rewrite the algorithm in docx + security and performance issue fix

I didn't find what the security or performance issue fix, but this coder suggested changing all of the files of the twitter codebase into docx. I'm sure this would be much better for version controlling the many pull requests fixing typos in the readme files. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1967/files#diff-

d2281ce4d6be5e3b6ee1c4c4f1bf80ee8dd0d05b38acf39a6b2b90f2e47923b0

3.5 Use a REAL programming language for the algorithm

It was only a matter of time before someone rewrote the code in BrainFuck. I wish they did more than just the main file but still admirable. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1751/files

3.6 Replace with Super Mario 64

This improvement would likely have made the twitter algorithm the most successful as they replaced the entire code base with Super Mario 64. I think our lives would be much better spent chasing blocky 3d renderings of stars in our grandparents basement but I don't think the twitter developers thought so seeing that they closed the PR without merging. Or maybe it was the copy right violation. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1643/files#diff-f9ccbd8dc314db438926ea307b6b773a827f1ac4fe4f8cb2131529862ea0bc14

3.7 uwu

One of my favorites, this developer went through the entire codebase and replaced all of the language with uwu speak. Most r's were replaced with 'w's. The tone of any speech was

filled with cute timid sta-studdering la-language. Admirably, whatever script the coder used to rewrite the entire codebase didn't even stop at the documentation, comments or readme. The entire codebase is completely replaced with uwu speak. It's genius. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1878/files

3.8 Add more social crimes

This PR is equal parts funny and interesting. They found the social crimes portion of the code and began adding more. Originally, there were a few obvious ones like medical misinformation, violence/hate, and a few placeholders. This PR does not back. Some notable new social crimes for the algorithm include; disliking broccoli, not leaving Brittany alone, denying the narrative, fursona disparagement, and DenyingThatBothCR7AndMessiAreLegendsIMeanYouCanP referOneToTheOtherJustDontDismissTheOtherOneSinceBot hAreLegends -> DenyingThatBothCR7AndMessiAreLegendsIMeanYouCanP referOneToTheOtherJustDontDismissTheOtherOneSinceBot hAreLegends. Probably one of my top PR's. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/1820/files

3.9 remove pronouns

Now the title of the PR made it seem like they would remove pronouns from people's pronouns or something anti-woke. The PR was even better. They find-deleted all pronouns in the code base to include pronouns inside of words. All *twitter*'s were *tw ters*. Not only is change in the comments but in the code as well. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/2036/files#diff-f01c49564cca6626aa0f13d4a27c9534f32f8c007f2dc18d7648 862420ec23b5

3.10 420 – Make numbers more accurate

Probably the most genius pull request. This amazing developer looked through the entire codebase and replaced every single magic number with *420*. For those of you who don't code, a magic number is a number that's just floating in code with no explanation. Why are we dividing by 2.6? I don't know, something a developer figured out and didn't explain why. Well now with this PR, there's no explanation necessary, it's always divide, multiply, index, floating point format, add, or subtract by 420. https://github.com/twitter/the-algorithm/pull/156