

Book Proposal Review
The Information Dark Age:
Toward a Political Economy of Online Conspiracism
September 2024

Dear Dr. Hannah,

Many thanks for allowing me to review and learn from your work. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the proposal and the introduction. Both have strengths and weaknesses: with some revisions, you will be in a good place to be published by Bloomsbury (or another house). I hope that my review will be helpful in the process.

You will find many detailed comments in both documents, some about the writing, some about structure (more in the introduction than in the proposal because of Bloomsbury's template), and many about arguments, key themes, and aspects that I think deserve more work. In this brief summary, I would like to capture some recurring comments.

Strengths:

— **the topic:** It is a crucial one, and any publisher will be interested in a well-crafted, systematic analysis of current media ecosystems, misinformation, conspiracies, etc.

— **your credentials:** you make a great case for yourself as the author. If you have an online presence, given the topic at hand, I'd add that too.

— **the overall framework:** I think the title works well, and the concept of “Information Dark Age” provides an interesting, novel lens through which to read and understand our era.

Areas for Improvement:

— **the overall framework:** most of my comments are somewhat related to this. I think the concept itself needs a clear(er) definition, a summary of what it targets and seeks to understand, and what it does to the fields of inquiry (and audiences) that you tackle and seek to address. Questions coming to my mind: how is the Information Dark Age related to information society? When did the expression “dark age” emerge (later revealed to be by online protagonists themselves during the 2000s, if I recall correctly.) What does the metaphor bring to your framework? Especially in the introduction, what are the geographical area and chronology the book will cover? Those are just a few suggestions to anchor your argument and the concept. In turn, this will help you to be **concise and clear** about the impact of your book (especially points 2 and 3 in the proposal)

— **engagement with existing studies:** this is most visible in the proposal, where you do not really engage with the titles you mention. How do you differentiate yourself, or extend, or revise, the idea of an information society, or the 1996 network society (both mentioned)? What you have here, as I point out in the comments themselves, suggests the first systematic analysis of 2016-2024 (and arguably before) concerning this new era of information and misinformation, its genesis, and its developments through three different lenses/sections. This needs to be elaborated much more forcefully and substantially.

— **lack of clarity and systematic development of key points:** I only take the example of “three major challenges” in the proposal (point 3): you never tell the reader what they are all about, at least I did not grasp them. In the proposal itself, the summary should be restructured, made more concise, and sharper (dare I say flashy, in a good way) with regard to the book’s overall scope, themes, and ambitions. Similarly, in the introduction, you can take up all the excellent points made in the “chapter by chapter description,” as the intro lacks precisely such concrete aspects (I got lost midway, see comments there). I hope my detailed comments will help you make sense of all this.

— **selling it with concrete evidence:** a good example is the “Key Features” section in the proposal (point 5). The case for your book deserves to be made much more forcefully, and for good reasons: I have read proposals about medieval farmers where the connection between past and present must be firmly established — on your end, you do not need to search long and hard for these connections, but they must be made very explicit nonetheless (proposal, point about competition and market, for instance). By “concrete” evidence, I mean the excellent arguments of each section in the proposal (point 7): you can use them for the introduction. As I understand it, it still is a work in progress, so I hope that all this will help you in some way along the way.

I hope these brief comments help you see where I think your proposal could be headed for success, recognition, and for filling a societal need, if not urgency, regarding the book’s ideas. I wish you all the best for the revisions, and I remain available for further consultation. Best wishes and congratulations on your work so far!