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Introducing the Australian Internet Observatory Research Dashboard

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The Australian Internet Observatory (AIO - https://internetobservatory.org.au/) has been funded by the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC –www.ardc.edu.au) in 2024 to support large-scale access to and use of social media and digital data more broadly by Australian researchers. A core part of the AIO is the Australian Internet observatory Research Dashboard (AIReD - https://www.aio.eresearch.unimelb.edu.au/) established at The University of Melbourne. The AIReD platform includes large-scale Cloud-based data harvesting from Reddit, Mastodon, BlueSky, FlickR, Foursquare, YouTube, and historic data from Twitter. The platform supports sentiment analysis on the posts as well as topic modelling to help understand the daily pulse of what citizens and organisations across Australia are talking about online. Most importantly, the platform supports discovery and access to data by the broader research community. This includes targeted search interfaces as well as use of large language model interfaces to support natural language querying of the resources.

The AIReD platform underpins many research and teaching efforts across Australia. This talk will cover some of the stories AIReD has been used to tell by researchers and students across Australia requiring access to social media at a scale that would otherwise be impossible without such a national capability.

The talk will also explore some of the technical challenges related to the Cloud infrastructure upon which AIReD depends and the ramifications of dealing with truly big data.

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