Algorithmic Control: Automated Decision Making in America's Cities

A reporting and research project by MuckRock and Rutgers Institute for Information Policy & Law, led by Michael Morisy and Professor Ellen P. Goodman, with support from a Pratt Fund grant for Freedom of Expression. http://bit.ly/AlgorithmicControl #AlgorithmicControl

MuckRock and the Rutgers Institute for Information Policy & Law (RIIPL) are collaborating on a new reporting and research project about local government use of big data, artificial intelligence, and algorithms. According to Rutgers Law Professor Ellen P. Goodman, who will be partnering on the project, "Algorithms are playing an ever larger part in who goes to jail, who gets dibs on the best education, how we move through cities, and every other part of public life – we need to know more about them." Through interviews with leading experts and public records requests filed across the country, MuckRock Projects Editor/Senior Reporter Beryl Lipton will investigate city contracts, requests for proposals, and in-house development of these systems of governance to build an open, searchable database of how these technologies are in use.

"We're excited to help broaden public understanding of the new ways in which government decisions are being made," said Michael Morisy, co-founder and executive director of MuckRock. "We'll be exploring how technology can make our democracy more efficient and responsive when used well, and also how negative the impact can be when we don't fully think through the consequences."

This reporting and analysis will explore key issues of algorithmic transparency and equity, including current best practices, the dangers of codifying existing biases, and how vendors handle the increasingly large amounts of sensitive data entrusted with them by agencies. RIIPL will help connect these investigations and data with academic research on smart city governance.

The project, including links to articles, primary documents used, and public records requests, is live here: https://www.muckrock.com/project/uncovering-algorithms-84/

When launched early next year, the database of algorithms in use across America will also be available at that project page. Those interested in following the project can register for updates here: http://eepurl.com/dMWn8k

RIIPL will co-host the materials as well as supplementary research materials at its website: https://riipl.rutgers.edu

News publishers interested in syndicating the reporting are invited to contact michael@muckrock.com

About the Partners:

RIIPL is a research institute at Rutgers Law School, focusing on information policy and law.

MuckRock is a government transparency non-profit building the infrastructure for an informed democracy.