

February 24, 2022

Welcome back to the Unfinished newsletter, where we explore key issues at the intersection of tech, ethics, and society.

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Damon Beres is not writing this week's email because (drum roll, please) he's got his hands full. Literally! Little 🥰 Nino was born earlier this week, everyone is happy and healthy, and the Unfinished team can attest to the baby being extremely cute.

Now, onto other matters.

What we're thinking about this week

The unfolding situation in Ukraine and how, once again, misinformation is making headlines and people are scrambling to make sense of a terrible and complex series of events. On the one hand, we have more access to quality information than ever in history (thank you, journalists, archivists, authors, and honest citizens). On the other, the sheer volume of what is published online — by reporters, Tweeters, state propagandists, trolls — can muddy our understanding of what's happening at any given moment, whether that's next door or halfway across the globe.

In recent years, the big platforms have gotten more aggressive about wiping outright propaganda from their platforms. Good. Keep doing better! But good. But what happens when that propaganda is also evidence of wrongdoing, or even a war crime? The tech website Protocol has a [thought-provoking write-up](#) on this by Issie Lapowsky. "How do you mitigate online harms that make war worse for civilians while preserving evidence of human rights abuses and war crimes," Graham Brookie, senior director of the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensics Research Lab, said to Protocol. We don't have the answer to that,

but there are interesting digital archive projects that are looking at this, and at least one web3 startup has an idea: store the evidence on the blockchain.

The founder of Arweave recently solicited contributions to an [archive of the unfolding crisis](#). From the sounds of it, they have gotten a lot — [a lot, a lot](#) — of submissions so far.

🔥 Cory Doctorow has a [searing piece](#) over on Medium about Facebook, which [recently reported user-growth decline](#) for the first time in the company's history. (Doctorow, like a lot of people, does not like Facebook, and is therefore delighted about this fact.) All that logging out has resulted in Meta, Facebook's parent company, losing \$230 billion of its market cap. Doctorow goes into some detail about so-called network effects, which is when a product gets more valuable the more active users it has. Does the decline at Facebook portend the beginning of the end? Doctorow hopes so. "I've been waiting for Facebook to die for 15 years now," [he writes](#). "The market can stay irrational for longer than I can stay solvent, which is why I'm glad I didn't short the stock. But I never lost hope. Today, I'm more hopeful than ever."

📌 For a real who's-who in tech's old guard, listen to [this episode](#) of the Economist's weekly tech podcast. It's (yes, yes) a web3 explainer, and it taps some big names who look to the past to help understand the future. There's futurist and web analyst Benedict Evans (his [newsletter](#) is great FWIW), Jutta Steiner, Ethereum's original security chief and a cofounder of Parity, and Tim O'Reilly, the founder of O'Reilly Media who is widely credited with coining the term *web2*, among others. A couple of key takeaways: Many of the web3 applications being hawked today will likely not be the ones that actually take hold and gain mass adoption over time. And for the love of all that is good in the world, web3 is not going to replace web2. They'll work together.

📺 If you missed this piece — "[I Can't Stop Watching a Livestream of Kyiv](#)" — from Jane Lytvynenko in the Atlantic, please save it and give it some time this weekend. It is a beautiful and restrained testament to what technology afforded her in the lead-up to this week's events in her home country. Normally, when we think about our hyperconnected world, we think about all the information it provides us (and the cacophony it creates). In this case, [Lytvynenko](#) found a respite from all the Twitter fights, the disinformation campaigns, and the 24/7 news cycle in [a simple digital livestream](#) of a public square in her home city of Kyiv, thousands of miles away.

That's it for this week, folks. We hope you found something interesting to read.

Thank you for reading!

Follow Unfinished ([@byUnfinished](#)) and Damon ([@dlberes](#)) on Twitter for ongoing chitchat on the changing web.

Have a great, restful weekend.

The Unfinished team

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