

How Well Do Facts Travel?: The Dissemination of Reliable Knowledge



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Why write about facts? Facts are everywhere. They litter the utterances of public life as much as the private conversations of individuals. They frequent the humanities and the sciences in equal measure. But their very ubiquity tells us not only why it is difficult to form general but sensible answers in response to seemingly simple questions about facts, but also why it is important to do so. This book discusses how facts travel, and when and why they sometimes travel well enough to acquire a life of their own. Whether or not facts travel in this manner depends not only on their character and ability to play useful roles elsewhere, but also on the labels, packaging, vehicles, and company that take them across difficult terrains and over disciplinary boundaries. These diverse stories of traveling facts, ranging from architecture to nanotechnology and from romance fiction to climate science, change the way we see the nature of facts. Facts are far from the bland and rather boring but useful objects that scientists and humanists produce and fit together to make narratives, arguments, and evidence. Rather, their extraordinary abilities to travel well - and to fly flags of many different colors in the process - shows when, how, and why facts can be used to build further knowledge beyond and away from their sites of original production and intended use.

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