Search engines can seem like magic. You have a question; the Internet has the answer.

But not all search results are equal. Everything from your location to previous searches and your social media habits builds a little content bubble. A personalized corner of the World Wide Web has been curated just for you.

A travel writer from Vancouver may get restaurants and must-visit sites when they type in “Venezuela,” while a human rights lawyer from New York will see news of the latest political crackdown.

Often, we don’t see the search results that defy our online habits, which is convenient when it comes to restaurant recommendations but problematic for staying informed. When the majority of us get our information, we don’t know what we’re missing.

According to a 2016 Reuters Institute study, 75 per cent of Canadians get their news online, and nearly half of us (45 per cent) from social media. More than just news, the Internet is where we turn for entertainment, research and inspiration.

The Internet was meant to be this great contest of ideas. But instead of expanding our perspectives, the Internet shows us what it thinks we want to see. Is it also dividing us?

The newest generation of algorithms, pieces of code that function like behind-the-scenes instructions, are ranking our preferences and filtering content online.

These algorithms are the reason you know when your favourite band is in town, when the store you like is having a sale—and why it seems like all of your Facebook friends share your political views. Facebook will prioritize posts to your feed that you’re more likely to agree with based on your likes. Our feeds quickly turn into echo chambers instead of thought provoking dialogue.

In the battle for clicks, these algorithms are everywhere on the web—search engines, mainstream news sites, your Netflix account. And this personalization is pushing us even further apart at a time when fake news and polarizing political debates already divide us. Politics, race and gender all appear differently through the lens of our bubbles.

Eli Pariser, author of the bestseller The Filter Bubble recently underscored the issue while speaking with The Guardian: “Some of these problems that our fellow citizens are having kind of disappear from view without our really even realizing.”

Opening your online experience to more voices could make you more engaged, informed and, ultimately, empathetic toward perspectives different from your own.

Privacy settings offer a first line of defense. But why not challenge yourself to break the algorithm by shifting your online habits.

The algorithms respond to our clicks. So, click away.

Click on ideas and stories you disagree with. Find voices on social media from different communities. Watch movies and visit websites that challenge your assumptions.

We all have to be active participants, curating our own diverse media by seeking out different voices to become more informed.

Information is at our fingertips—but a well-rounded, informed perspective on the issues of our time is harder to come by these days.