

Googlization of Libraries

Edited by

William Miller and Rita M. Pellen



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This book includes a variety of articles which look critically and judiciously at Google and its products, with a focus on Google Scholar and Google Book Search. It also examines their usefulness in a public service context. Its ultimate aim is to assess the use of Google as a major information resource. Its subject matter deals with online megasearch engines and their influence on reference librarianship, the impact of Google on information seeking, librarianship and the development of book digitization projects in which Google Book Search plays its part.

This book will be of interest to librarians across all educational sectors, library science scholars and publishers.

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Introduction: Living with Google

William Miller

As I write this, I am eagerly awaiting the completion of Siva Vaidhyanathan's book, to be called *The Googlization of Everything: How One Company Is Disrupting Culture, Commerce, and Community—and Why We Should Worry*, the creation of which is being chronicled on his blog, www.googlizationofeverything.com. As discussed in the September 25, 2007 edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vaidhyanathan asserts now that Google has “‘utterly infiltrated our culture’ . . . it’s time to start asking questions about Google-as-monolith.” He further states that “if Google becomes the dominant way we navigate the Internet . . . then it will have remarkable power to set agendas and alter perceptions. . . . Its biases are built into its algorithms. It knows more about us every day. We know almost nothing about it.”

Librarians certainly share these concerns, and many of the authors included in this book are asking questions, though few would want to go back to a pre-Google age. It is fair to say that we in libraries have a love/hate relationship with Google at this point, watching with a mixture of admiration and discomfort as it inexorably displaces our searching tools, and even ourselves to some extent, while on the other hand it makes our lives easier and in any case is an inevitability we need to accept in a creative way and work into our own reconceptualized work, even if we have misgivings about it.

Several Chapters in this book engage in just the sort of questioning that Vaidhyanathan envisions. Charlie Potter very thoughtfully critiques the company and its products in “Standing on the Shoulders of

Libraries: A Holistic and Rhetorical Approach to Teaching Google Scholar.” He points out that “Google Scholar succeeds only because libraries have provided access to their resources via the Google Scholar interface,” and that libraries “make possible the success of the Google Scholar interface by enabling users to access local collections.” Potter advocates that we “look critically and rhetorically at the Google technology itself.” He worries that “while librarians claim to stand for access, they are simultaneously allowing an advertising corporation to craftily place itself directly between the library and the patron.”

In a similar spirit but in a broader context, Mark Y. Herring cautions us to remember the true value of libraries in his “Fool’s Gold: Why the Internet Is No Substitute for a Library.” He says “I am certain that I do not want Dante with an ad for Virago, or one for erectile dysfunction.” “There may still be time,” he says, “to make the Web what it should be, a tool, like many other tools, that can aid and abet our pursuit of turning information into knowledge . . . but the present state of affairs put us exactly light-years from this goal. Are librarians paying any attention to these things? . . . A few more years down this road and the question will no longer matter. We will have, not the future we want, but the future we allowed. We have arrived on the Information Superhighway, all right, but are we rushing all too fast to make libraries, and library services, that highway’s first roadkill?”

Two articles take a more positive approach to living with Google. In “Who Holds the Keys to the Web for Libraries?,” Emily F. Blankenship acknowledges that “the general public and many librarians now rely upon mega search engines to locate, in a timely manner, the most obscure data.” She maintains that “libraries could still play vital roles in these transactions because we can provide access to more scholarly resources, but the mega search engines, in reality, serve as Internet guideposts for most people and our challenge is to bring people back to their library holdings and services.” Similarly, in “An Opportunity, Not a Crisis: How Google Is Changing the Individual and the Information Profession,” Kay Cahill argues that “much of what is typically seen as negative about Google is, in fact, positive.”

Google Scholar and Google Book Search continue to be the focus of most librarians’ interest in Google’s products, and the lack of information and transparency regarding these products is widespread. Some insight is provided by Barbara Quint in her reprinted piece “Changes at Google Scholar: A Conversation with Anurag Acharya.” Quint, an editor at *Searcher* magazine, interviewed the designer of Google Scholar and shares new information such as the fact that Google Scholar “has

launched its own digitization project, separate from the high-profile Google Book Search,” the fact that it has a new key author feature, and the fact that it is expanding into non-English languages and non-Western content. Quint’s article is interesting in light of Philipp Mayr and Anne-Kathrin Walter’s earlier findings, in “Studying Journal Coverage in Google Scholar,” that there is a paucity of coverage of German literature “as well as weaknesses in the accessibility of Open Access content.”

A pair of articles here investigates the practical use of Google Scholar, and librarians’ attitudes toward it. In “Attitudes of OhioLINK Librarians Toward Google Scholar™,” Joan Giglierano reports the results of a survey of Ohio academic librarians investigating their “attitudes and current practices regarding promotion of Google Scholar.” She notes the concerns of some that promoting Scholar will cause users to abandon more traditional library search tools, will lead users to think of librarians as irrelevant, will lead users into a world of “incomplete and redundant content that will water down scholarship,” and will, finally, lead users to pay for content that their libraries already provide free of charge. Nevertheless, a minority of Ohio academic institutions are recognizing the tool’s value and are linking to it from their Web sites. In “Using Google Scholar at the Reference Desk,” Karen Bronshteyn and Kathryn Tvaruzka maintain that Google Scholar has usefulness as a reference tool of last resort, including citation completion, an alternative when catalogs are down, and a helpful resource to encourage interdisciplinary searching.

Google Book Search continues to fascinate librarians. Several pieces here explore this project, in relation to other digitization projects. Jill E. Grogg and Beth Ashmore discuss the relationship between the digitization projects that the Google Book Search partner libraries worked on and how these libraries will use the digital copies of the books scanned by Google. Shawn Martin, in “To Google or Not to Google, That Is the Question: Supplementing Google Book Search to Make It More Useful for Scholarship,” discusses the relationship between Google Book Search and Early English Books Online, Evans Early American Imprints, and Eighteenth Century Collections Online Text Creation Partnership, which do a highly specialized full-text-searchable digitization of early English works not amenable to mass digitization because of their gothic or other fonts and other issues surrounding the digitization of nonmodern texts. In “The Million Book Project in Relation to Google” Gloriana St. Clair discusses several digitization projects including The Million Book Project, which is digitizing non-Western materials, UN publications, and other specialized materials not envisioned by Google. In “Using Metadata to

Discover the Buried Treasure in Google Book Search,” Millie Jackson explores “the metadata that Google captures as well as comparing it to the MBooks project at The University of Michigan.” She discovers that Google facilitates research in many ways, despite its limitations.

Two pieces focusing on little-known Google products round out this collection. In “Google Video—Just Another Video Sharing Site?” Tine Walczyk discusses both Google Video and YouTube, along with other video-sharing resources such as iFilm, AOL, and Broadcaster, as a service to people, and in “Google’s Bid to Build Cooperation and Partnerships Through Librarian Central and Google for Educators,” Robert J. Lackie points out that Google has made good-faith efforts to create tools to help librarians and educators, which it absolutely had no obligation to do and which we need to become more aware of. The existence of these tools illustrates both Google’s constantly expanding restlessness and its sincere desire to reach out, though one could certainly put a sinister spin on these or any other tools which Google has created or will create, and believe that these are merely efforts to co-opt, or “monetize” at some future point.

Love it or hate it, we are learning to live with Google, and we must do so. Perhaps we can also affect Google, if we offer constructive advice, as well as adapting and learning from its more positive aspects. As the cliché goes, librarians like to search, while people like to find, and Google makes it remarkably easy, not always but very often, for us to find things. We are already learning that lesson as we unveil new generations of browsers and online catalogs such as AquaBrowser, Primo, and Endeca. The articles in this collection show that skepticism is healthy and normal, but wholesale rejectionism is counterproductive and unworthy of the best in librarianship. Google is imperfect but it is very helpful. Let us make the most of it, in the spirit of helping our users, which is, after all, what we are about.

Standing on the Shoulders of Libraries: A Holistic and Rhetorical Approach to Teaching Google Scholar

Charlie Potter

The professed goals of the Google Corporation closely resemble those of most public and academic libraries. The stated goal of Google, “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful,” is global in scope and operates on the assumption that, indeed, the world’s information is not universally accessible and useful . . . or organized.¹ Of course, no library would claim that it has achieved (or ever could achieve) this lofty goal; one central reason for this is that libraries generally serve local populations (i.e., community members, students, scholars) and/or collect specific materials. In addition to organizing localized collections of information in an attempt to make them accessible

and useful, librarians help people find high-quality and apt information depending on their unique search needs, assist information seekers in understanding and using this information, and hope to help people appreciate the value of information seeking with respect to lifelong learning.

Google, in contrast, offers one-stop information shopping and banks on the usability of its interface and ability to generate advertising revenue. Although slight superficial differences exist between the missions of Google and libraries, one still wonders, "Why would a corporation want to step in and do the same thing that a library does, except on a more global scale?" There are several possible answers to this question. First, Google believes (and not altogether unfairly) that it can do a better job of organizing information than librarians can. Second, perhaps, Google also feels that it can enable the creation of information by users across the globe. A third and often unmentioned reason is that Google discovered that it could capitalize on information seekers, especially those who make a career out of research.

Google Scholar, unlike many of Google's more global services, functions in conjunction with another party; in this case, the other party is the academic library (and their local collections). As Google acknowledges, Google Scholar succeeds only because libraries have provided access to their resources via the Google Scholar interface. In addition to the aforementioned goal of organizing the world's information, Google adds the following statement to its Google Scholar help page: "Facilitating library access to scholarly texts brings us one step closer to this goal. We're thankful to the libraries and librarians who make it possible."²

Indeed, libraries do make possible the success of the Google Scholar interface by enabling users to access local collections. As Jeffery Pomerantz suggests, "It is possible for libraries to add value to search technologies by providing a layer of service available to those using it."³ Value, in this case, is evidenced through an endorsement or the employment of a particular search technology; by allowing Google Scholar to link to library resources, libraries have provided the needed "layer of service" that translates into an endorsement of Google.

It is worth noting that Google Scholar has similarly added a layer of service to libraries by allowing people to access materials through a Web-based interface. Google Scholar, at this moment in time, cannot fulfill its stated goal without the help (and financial contribution) of libraries. Thus, although librarians endorse Google and its scholarly search interface, Google claims to make library resources more accessible. Of course, Google also uses the relationship to gain recognition for

the Google brand, which in turn creates revenue for the Google Corporation.

For fans of Google, these facts might raise the question, "If Google Scholar gives me what I need, why should I care if they make a little money in the deal, especially since Google Scholar does not yet contain advertisements?" I will examine the implications of this question, highlighting reasons why librarians, especially those involved in bibliographic instruction, need to examine the rhetoric behind Google Scholar and the market forces surrounding it. Using issues of advertising, privacy, and censorship as examples, I will holistically and rhetorically analyze Google Scholar, illustrating that many of the goals and actions of Google are antithetical to those most libraries would support. Further, I will examine the Google Scholar interface and suggest that treating Google technology as a neutral tool is dangerous, as the rhetoric of Google Scholar is shaping a new generation of researchers; in this case, the interface is determining the search. In addition, I will offer possible pedagogical strategies for dealing with Google Scholar in the information literacy curriculum.

LIBRARIES AND GOOGLE SCHOLAR: A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP?

In many cases, the relationship between libraries and Google Scholar is happily symbiotic. Google Scholar helps the library by lending its popular search technology to the cause of academic research, and libraries allow Google Scholar access to their holdings. The only thing that differs between what one would find in a library database versus what one could find on Google Scholar is, largely, the interface.⁴ However, many additional implications emerge from this union. Specifically, as mentioned above, libraries are effectively endorsing the Google Corporation. Of course, corporate endorsements happen frequently in the academic world. As early as the 1960s, critics like Richard Hofstadter began noting the relationship between the university and the corporation. In most cases, this means that a university chooses a Coca-Cola contract over a Pepsi contract or that its sports teams wear Nike rather than Adidas attire. In turn, a university reaps a financial benefit, in addition to other product-related perks.⁵

In the case of libraries and Google Scholar, the corporation provides a service that supplements (or replaces) a service performed previously by the university. Google Scholar does not charge libraries for this ser-

vice; instead, the library pays in other ways, namely through their agreements with proprietary databases and their purchase of link resolver technology, which I will discuss in a later paragraph. Money does not flow between Google and libraries. Thus, by allowing Google access to their collections, libraries assume the expense of the technology and the scholarly information that make the Google interface successful. In short, the library allows Google to provide access to information for which the library has already paid through a technology that the library provides; in turn, Google also gets an opportunity to advertise for its other sources and a forum through which it can focus solely on interface rather than content.

Of course, we must not forget that Google is, at the end of the day, an advertising corporation—not a public service. This situation is not altogether beneficial for the library when Google, as previously discussed, professes a mission that assumes librarians are not doing an adequate job and need assistance from a corporation. Fears of corporate takeover coupled with fears of being viewed as outdated and obsolete put libraries in a complex ethical and economic quagmire: Do librarians pair with Google and appear to be on the cutting edge of search technology, or do they choose to continue autonomously at the risk of being viewed as an out-of-touch profession of Luddites?

To answer this question, librarians must analyze the value of the Google relationship from the perspective of the user. The best librarians are keenly aware of information equity issues, and a stated goal of the profession is to assuage these concerns. In fact, access and information equity are listed as “core values” of the library profession.⁶ As librarians know, one major obstacle to access and equity is the cost of the equipment and interfaces that provide access to that information. Thus, it is a professional ethical imperative that good librarians will offer the *best* information solutions to people, even if those solutions can be obtained without direct use of the proprietary resources of the library. In other words, if Google is seemingly cost-free and provides easy-to-access information (sometimes the same information a person could find in a library, especially in the case of Google Scholar) through an interface users prefer, then librarians must use/teach/recommend Google.

However, good librarians must also ask what factors make something the “best” information source. In addition to the traditional evaluative factors used to determine the quality of an information source, information economics must be considered. Corporations like Google have a significant stake in whether or not resources like Google Scholar will be viewed as viable information resources for academic research-

ers. When academic libraries add value to Google Scholar by allowing an advertising corporation to dictate the medium through which people find information, they must also ask, to reference Marshall McLuhan, what message is being conveyed through the search medium. For this reason, a holistic rhetorical evaluation—a thorough critique and examination of the linguistic, social, cultural, economic, technological, and political aspects of an entity itself as well as the forces that govern it—can help libraries decide if the values of libraries and their people mesh with the values of the Google corporation.

Samuel Green suggested over 100 years ago that, “A librarian should be as unwilling to allow an inquirer to leave the library with his question unanswered as a shop-keeper is to have a customer go out of his store without making a purchase.”⁷ Unfortunately, this metaphor is more dangerous than ever; in fact, when one considers Google Scholar, the relationship between “inquirer” and “customer” seems to suggest that the entities are identical or interchangeable rather than metaphorical. An information seeker and a customer looking to make a purchase are not the same; further, a shop-keeper might want to, for personal benefit, sell something to a customer that he/she does not really want or need in order to make a profit. Although Google Scholar is, on the surface, seemingly free to users, it actually resembles the store in the above metaphor, rather than the library. In this case, what appears to be “free” does not always actually promote equity or access. Nor is it truly free.

THE RHETORIC OF GOOGLE SCHOLAR AND THE GOOGLE ENDORSEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Internet is not neutral or without cost, and neither are the technologies that make it possible. Instead, it is shaped by largely corporate and capitalist forces. As Laura Gurak writes:

The efficiency of the Internet is great, and the ability to reach out to others and tap into vast sources of information and ideas . . . is profound. Yet more and more of the Internet is being used to make money, gather our personal information, protect corporate intellectual property, and encourage us to shop. . . . How we view the world and how we live in it are being shaped by the features of these new technologies.⁸

Google promotes all of the activities Gurak mentions: making money, gathering information, protecting the corporation over the user, and encouraging consumption through advertising. This is the major way in which the true mission of Google differs from that of most libraries in America.⁹ In other words, both entities profess information access and organization as their goals; however, we must ask, "To what end?" For libraries, the answer varies but usually involves fostering an environment where a more intelligent and informed public can grow. Conversely, the answer for Google is making money for itself and its advertisers—seamlessly. We should also not be fooled into thinking that the technology used by Google (or any search technology, really) is a neutral force in the information seeking process. Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher intelligently caution against this type of assumption by pointing out that computers are not simply innocent tools that we use to manipulate or create information; instead, computers and the interfaces they present both shape us and use us to create information.

Data mining, a practice which Google uses to create advertising profiles, is a good example of this phenomenon. A user searches for a product using a particular strategy. He/she finds the product and moves on to another task. All the while, computers and corporations take this data and use them to assemble descriptions of how people search and for what they are searching. Then, a corporation like Google can "combine personal information collected from you with information from other Google services or third parties to provide a better user experience, including customizing content for you."¹⁰ Thus, while a person *thinks* he/she is just doing a basic Google search, he/she is also allowing Google to use information (in conjunction with information from third parties that are likely to also use data mining) from that search to create his/her experience. In other words, an information seeker tells the computer to search for something (i.e., the user is the agent) but the search paradigm has been predetermined. Of course, Google claims to do this for the benefit of information users; however, in reality, the user experience is only important insofar as it supports Google's larger goal: generating money for shareholders.

A conflict of interest exists here, as advertising is a form of persuasion attached solely to selling products and making money; being able to see through this type of persuasion is central to critical literacy and information literacy. I am not the first to argue that Google's true goals actually inhibit the growth of an intelligent and informed public.¹¹ As John Harms and Douglas Kellner astutely assert:

[A]dvertising's current role in society is exploitative, wasteful, and manipulative and represents a form of domination that perpetuates capitalist hegemony and that thwarts participatory democracy and the development of individual autonomy. . . . Advertising undermines the psycho-cultural base for a public sphere and democratic participation in social life. While democracy requires an active, inquiring public citizen/subject, advertising is part of a privatized consumer society which offers commodity spectacles as a substitute for participation in social life. . . . Advertising attempts to assure and assuage its audience and to promote the belief that individual commodity solutions are present for all problems.¹²

In other words, advertising, by creating a picture of what people should be by suggesting what they should buy, lulls citizens into passivity. Advertising tells people what to do, rather than encouraging them to think for themselves. Moreover, the capitalist forces that underlie advertising seek to convince people that they are always lacking something and that they need to consume in order to be happy, intelligent, and/or acceptable. Advertising assumes that the way to act is to consume rather than to, say, protest or learn. By attaching advertising and persuasion (very libidinal persuasion, in most cases) to information seeking, Google emphasizes that participation is most important when it involves spending money.

As previously mentioned, Google Scholar does not currently include advertisements in its list of results. However, Google has not eliminated the possibility of ads on Google Scholar pages. In a 2005 article, a Google Scholar engineer was asked about the possibility of advertising on Google Scholar. His response was non-committal: "It's possible down the line."¹³ This is to be expected; libraries are not paying for the use of this service, and, for reasons previously discussed, the library profession would be naïve to think that Google is offering this service without the possibility of making some money.

Regardless of absence of product advertising on the pages of Google Scholar at the time of the publication of this chapter, the most obvious advertisement lies within Google Scholar itself: each page is marked with a giant Google logo—the most obvious endorsement that libraries give the Google Corporation. This is what makes the Google Scholar interface attractive; it is branded with a familiar name that users already know and trust. Conversely, when a user searches a library website or proprietary database, he/she might be encountering a new brand. This

argument relates to the success of federated searching more generally. People prefer to use as few interfaces as possible. Some information professionals suggest that libraries should not even possess websites; rather, they should work as diligently as possible to integrate seamlessly with other services, namely Google Scholar. Lorcan Dempsey, for example, argues for this type of integration, specifically because services like Google Scholar reach “learners where they choose to look for information.”¹⁴ This way, learners will eventually find themselves searching through library content, even if they did not initially start at the website of the library. However, when we are “meeting” learners in a space not controlled by the library, we are condoning and promoting the use of that space, however indirectly. Google Scholar is indeed advertising for its more general search services, which, of course, advertise to generate revenue. In this way, Google Scholar is currently a piece of a much larger revenue pie, and intelligent users cannot ignore what the larger Google Corporation does (or why they do it), especially when the Google Scholar service all the while understates the involvement of libraries and other proprietary databases.¹⁵

Thus, Google is funded by advertisements, and these same advertisements inadvertently make Google Scholar possible. Further, the cost of a service like Google Scholar is hidden because of the absence of ads paired with the fact that Google is an advertising corporation. As Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner suggest, “Consumers pay for the spectacles of entertainment, subsidized by advertising, in the form of higher costs for products. Moreover, the entertainment and information offered is a function of what the culture industries think will sell and that on the whole advances its own interests, producing more desires for its goods and way of life.”¹⁶ In this case, the interests of the culture industry are likely counter to the larger purpose of the library.

While I cannot argue that *any* information or institution is truly neutral—everything is indeed rhetorical on some level—or free from bias or persuasion, I believe that certain transgressions of neutrality should not be overlooked. For example, Google was recently publicly criticized for its response to Michael Moore’s documentary on the wrongdoings of the pharmaceutical industry, *Sicko*. On the Google Health Advertising blog,¹⁷ blogger Lauren Turner authored an entry entitled, “Does negative press make you Sicko?”¹⁸ In the post, Turner acknowledges that the film is “generating significant buzz and is sure to spur a lively conversation about health coverage, care, and quality in America. While legislators, litigators, and patient groups are growing excited, others among us are growing nervous.”

It's easy to read between the lines here: the people who are growing nervous are the pharmaceutical, health care, and advertising companies. Why? They have been criticized and stand to lose money. Whether one believes the highly rhetorical strategies of *Sicko* (which is also a money-generating product), he/she must also be aware that Google is prepared to defend the pharmaceutical industry with—what else?—advertisements. Turner continues,

We can place text ads, video ads, and rich media ads in paid search results or in relevant websites within our ever-expanding content network. Whatever the problem, Google can act as a platform for educating the public and promoting your message. We help you connect your company's assets while helping users find the information they seek.

Thus, Google is trying to, as Turner notes, “solve the problems” of Big Pharma using ads. Users should note that this is not a public service campaign. Instead, it is one corporation looking to protect another. Essentially, Google has said to pharmaceutical and health care corporations, “Tell us what you want us to say about your corporation, and we will say it, if you pay us enough.” This blog illustrates no concern for honesty or the integrity of information.

This health information-related incident highlights several problems with Google Scholar and the larger Google enterprise. Health information is an example commonly used by librarians and other information literacy educators to illustrate the dangers of the Internet. For example, the website of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine explicitly states, “Be aware that websites which advertise products should be read with great care.”¹⁹ The National Institutes of Health provides similar guidelines.²⁰

In this instance, a dichotomy exists between the information one finds on Google versus Google Scholar. One is profit-driven and contains advertisements, and the other is seemingly benign. Some Internet users are savvy enough to know that they should not trust *just any* website for their health information, and academic librarians attempt to teach users how to evaluate websites for their credibility when it comes to matters of health; however, these users have access to reliable proprietary health information through their academic library. In this situation, the inference made by Google is that one source of information is reputable; the other source contains information with varying levels of dependability. Thus,

the information in Google Scholar is good, and the information found through the original Google interface may be bad (or, at least, librarians would caution users against it due to its advertisements which are often biased toward pharmaceutical and health care companies).

It is important to ask whether, as information practitioners, we can in good conscience refer users to a tool that is owned and operated with the revenue that is potentially generated by these kinds of profit-driven advertisements that are, in some cases, only loosely based on truth. We must also question whether it is acceptable for a search interface to include advertisements but not acceptable for a website to do so. When we suggest Google without pointing out to users that it is indeed a website that advertises products, are we not ignoring our own advice regarding information literacy? And what if we cannot suggest Google Scholar because our university is not affiliated or a user is not affiliated with a university? Further, is it ethical for Google to provide two products: one with “unsafe” information and advertisements, and one with scholarly information and no advertisements?²¹

We must give equal consideration to the privacy practices of the Google Corporation. Intellectual freedom and privacy are hallmarks of the library profession. Librarians have been some of the only professionals to, as an organization, oppose the privacy-violating aspects of the U.S. PATRIOT Act and are generally in support of legislation that promotes the rights of individuals to read about and search for information on virtually every topic. Despite this commitment to privacy, the interaction that occurs between librarian and patron has been thought to sometimes inhibit possible search questions over controversial topics, whereas the impersonal Internet provides anonymity and the freedom to search for any topic, however lewd, dangerous, or personal. Of course, whether people know it or not, this is simply untrue. While the embarrassment of asking certain questions might inhibit users, one can easily argue that what they don’t know *is hurting them*.

Google has been criticized repeatedly concerning its policy of retaining search records indefinitely.²² Curious about communism? Google knows. Have a debilitating and personal disease? Google knows. Of course, institutions like Google could use this information to, say, catch child predators or terrorists. However, this type of surveillance is frightening, especially because most people are so unaware of the digital trail that follows every search. The people who are aware can be scared into ignorance, choosing not to research certain subjects because of their social or political import. Although it is worth noting that many of the major proprietary databases do not publicly disclose their practices for retain-