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www.networkcultures.org/query

SOCIETY OF THE QUERY

STOP SEARCHING,
START
QUESTIONING!

Inhoudelijk en financiële verantwoording Society of the Query, maart 2010

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Inhoudsopgave

1 Society of the Query

Naam project	: Society of the Query
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Design en ontwerp	: Grrr.nl

1.1 Belangrijkste opgeleverde resultaten

- Society of the Query programma boek >> Een omschrijving per sessie en daarbinnen een overzicht van alle deelnemende sprekers. Daarnaast is van iedere deelnemer een korte biografie opgenomen.

- http://networkcultures.org/search/ >> De website/weblog van het event.

- http://networkcultures.org/query >> De voormalige blog van Society of the Query wordt nu gebruikt als site voor gezamenlijk onderzoek naar zoekmachines in de breedste zin van het woord. Dit initiatief bouwt voort op op de gebeurtenissen over dit onderwerp, Quero in Maastricht, september 2007, Deep Zoeken in Wenen, november 2008 en de Vereniging van de query in Amsterdam, november 2009. Het idée achter deze blog is het hebben van een vaste plek waar materiaal kan worden verzameld en geactualiseerd rondom dit thema.
- Op korte termijn zal dit initiatief 'gelanceerd' worden en zullen sprekers van de drie events toegang krijgen tot deze blog.

- Opnames van alle presentaties >> alle presentaties zijn terug te vinden op http://webcolleges.hva.nl/webcollege/viewer. In dit systeem zijn de presentaties opgenomen voor een heldere documentatie.

- 250 tot 300 bezoekers, verdeeld over 2 dagen.

- Blogposts in relatie tot presentaties, zie ook hierop volgende pagina's.

- Nieuwe contacten onderling binnen de sprekers, alsook met het instituut.

- Uitgebreide lijst van bronnen zie hiervoor ook http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/search/resources/.

- Documentatie / INC online media archief, foto's en illustraties.

- Publiek bezoekers programma.

- Verdere theorievorming met concepten als netwerkcultuur, georganiseerde netwerken en networked politics.

- Aandacht in diverse media, zoals Vrij Nederland en NOS Journaal op 3.

- Interessant en goed bezocht avondprogramma rondom zoekmachines en kunst.

1.2 http://networkcultures.org/search

De blog is gedurende het project heel erg goed bezocht. Dit is de mainportal richting de doelgroep. Alle uitingen omtrent het event zijn hier gecommuniceerd. Deze blog zal bestaan blijven. Hier is divers archief materiaal van video interviews tot foto's terug te vinden.

2 Blogposts

Gedurende Society of the Query is er net als op voorgaande event een team van bloggers actief geweest. Dit team heeft alles presentaties bijgewoond en hier verslag van gedaan. Achtereenvolgens treft u alle blogpost aan die geschreven zijn tijdens Winter Camp 09. Een prachtig verslag van alles wat er zich ontwikkeld heeft gedurende die vijf dagen.

Siva Vaidhyanathan on Googlization, "Only the elite and proficient get to opt out"

Posted: November 19, 2009 at 7:13 am | By: chris castiglione | Tags: Google Street View, Googlization, Siva Vaidhyanathan

The term *Googlization*, according to Siva Vaidhyanathan, is the process of being processed, rendered, and represented by Google.

Vaidhyanathan's upcoming book *The Googlization of Everything* investigates the actions and intentions behind the Google corporation. This afternoon at The Society of the Query Vaidhyanathan choose one issue from his book: the politics and implications of Google Maps' Street View.

According to EU law: there cannot be any identifiable information about a person in Google Street View. Google' s standard defense up till now has been that they respect privacy by scrambling faces and license plates, to which Vaidhyanathan commented,

In my former neighborhood in New York there were probably 50 illegal gambling institutions around. Now, imagine an image of me on Google Street View taken in proximity to one of these illegal places. I'm more than two meters tall and I'm a very heavy man. You could blur my face forever, I'm still bald. In New York, usually I was walking around my neighborhood with a white dog with brown spots, everyone in the neighborhood knew that dog. So you could blur my face and it still wouldn't matter – it's me, I'm obviously me. Anonymization isn't an effective measure, as we've already found out with data. (most likely referring to the AOL case of user #4417749)

Just this morning Swiss authorities made a statement that they plan on bringing a lawsuit against Google in the Federal Administrative Tribunal because Google isn't meeting the country's demands for tighter privacy protection with Google Street View. Vaidhyanathan commenting on the news said, "Google Street View has been entering so many areas of friction and resistance – this brings it to our attention that the game is over for Google." Vaidhyanathan's criticism of Google Street View continued with Google's trouble in Tokyo. "The strongest reaction against Google Street View has been in Japan," he said, "Google will

scrap all of their data from Japan and re-shoot the entire country. Google mismeasured how the Japanese deal with public space. In the older sections of Tokyo the street in front of one's house is considered the person's responsibility, it is seen as an extension of their house. Thus, Google Street View is actually invading someone's private space."

Earlier this year Google CEO Eric Schmidt made the following remark about the international appeal of Google,

The most common question I get about Google is 'how is it different everywhere else?' and I am sorry to tell you that it's not. People still care about Britney Spears in these other countries. It's really very disturbing.

Vaidhyanathan explained this as being a part of Google's *protocol imperialism*,

Google isn't particularly American, nor is it particularly American / Western European. It's important to remember that Google is much more a factor of daily life in Europe. In the United States it is just barely 70% of the search market, in Western Europe it is around 90% and in places like Portugal it is 96% and I don't know why.

For Vaidhyanathan the biggest problem with Google is that as it expands into more parts of the world that are less proficient, and less digitally inclined, there will be more examples of friction and harm because more people are going to lack the awareness to cleanse their record.

It's important to note that Google does offer services for protecting and managing user data:
- Google Street View allows you to report objectionable content
- Google dashboard shows a summary of all the data Google stores about you.
- An engineering team within Google that refer to themselves as The Data Liberation Front is working to make it easier for users to control the data they store in Google's products.

Vaidhyanathan didn't specifically mention these options, but briefly acknowledged the existence of such tools before quickly moving onto the strongest part of his argument, "We in this room are not likely to be harmed by Google because all of us in this room are part of a techno-cosmopolitan elite. Only the elite and proficient get to opt out."

In closing, Vaidhyanathan exemplified the problem with a photograph of a man caught on the side of a U.S. highway and commented, "This man doesn't know that he is in Google Street View so we get to laugh at him. Not knowing is going to be the key to being a victim in this system."

More information about Siva Vaidhyanathan and his criticism of Google can be found on his website, and in this lively Google debate at IQ2 and New York Times article from last year.

[Martin Feuz (CH) Google Personal Search – What are we to make of it?](#)

Posted: November 17, 2009 at 10:57 pm | By: rosa menkman |

Martin Feuz is an independent researcher with a strong interest in human-information interactions. Specifically, he focuses on exploratory (Web) search and the ways in which such interactions can be meaningfully and experimentally supported. In his recent work, he undertook a critical analysis of Google personal search to open the lid of Google's black box a little bit and to make some of its behavior more door reflection.

In Society of the Query, Feuz presents the research that lead to the development of his new website [Perspectoma.com](#). Perspectoma is a research engine that allows us to get a glimpse into how Google Personal Search delivers 'personalised' search results on the basis of an users Search and Web History.

Perspectoma works by simulating Search and Web Histories. The website offers five profiles for which Search and Web Histories are developed. These profiles contain approximately the equal amount of search queries that an average user accumulates over two years of searching with Google.

When performing a search, Perspectoma's search result page shows:
- the search results only available for the profile
- the search results of an anonymous user without personalization
- the search results that are available to both, the selected profile and the anonymous user and but have a different search result ranking (blue)
- the search results that are available to both, the selected profile and the anonymous user and share the same search result ranking (green)

Google describes personal search as 'based on your search & web history. Your personal results will be re-ranked or swapped for more relevant ones." However, it gives no indications whatsoever when a particular search result is personalized. Therefore you actually never really know where your returns come from, and which ones are specially there to target you as a consumer, or to help you. Google states that if you don't want personal search, you can just sign out of your Google account, Unfortunately, this is not a very practical because in the end you seem to sign into Google very often and easily forget to sign out.

Feuz starts his presentation by posing four main questions he wanted to deal with while creating Perspectoma.
- how do these personal returns develop in terms of frequency and intensity?
- what underlying patterns can we identify?
- how will grouping of profiles influence the search terms?

To find answers to these questions, Feuz describes the research he did according to the 3 ghost accounts based on the characters Kant, Foucault and Nietzsche. He trained all of the accounts equally in training sessions with the help of software that did different search queries. To do this, he had to find a way to make an artificial profile relational for subjective inspection of personalized search results. To tackle this problem, he used specific books for the different theorists. He also had to find a way to get plenty search terms to create profiles. After training session 1 Feuz found that the search returns for Foucaults profile were personalized results quite early, but not very frequently. The search returns for Kant were a bit of personalized but not to much/to often. Feuz also considers that this could have to do with the type language Kant uses in his books. For Nietszche a lot of personalized results turned up, but this actually was the result of a small glitch in the technology.

Martin Feuz concludes that he is surprised how soon the personal search returns seem start turning up. Google personalized search is not shy. After the second training sessions the amount of personal returns seem to grow, while after 3000 search queries more than every second result is personalized. Also, it seems that there is a kind of group profiling happening. Finally, Feuz states that personalized search does not seem to be able to lift the less dominant voices from deep down the unbiased search returns. Actually, it seems that most often personalization means that only some of the returns from the second page have been swapped into the first ten personal search returns.

Antoine Isaac: Semantic Search for Europeana

Posted: November 17, 2009 at 5:02 pm | By: tjerk timan | Tags: Antoine Isaac, Europeana, VU

Thanks for the opportunity to talk. I work at the VU and I am talking about the project Europeana. This is the result of a teamwork of the University, I am just presenting it.

Introduction

What is Europeana? It is a portal which that want to interconnect museum archives. Access to digital content. Currently there are 50 providers. and the number is growing. 10 million objects is the target. Maybe from a more practical : we want to create access but we also want create channels to other websites and so on. Such a thing does not go without challenges. The very issue of providing access that is very difficult. They are of an iterational nature. And how to get data besides the pictures? The method is to use metadata. Antoine shows the current portal, which he explains as a "basic search box" (picture needed). If a search query is done, different result are given that are linked to the search (pic, books etc). You can start refining you search by filtering (language, data and so on). This is called semantic search and it allows you to refine your search. To some extend this is not matching the richness of data that is out there in the databases. The idea is to go a step beyond semantic enables search. Some functionalities are explained, such as clustering. Antoine explains that by exploiting semantics, we can exploit relations that are stored in the objects. We can use information that is actually there already in the meta data. Some kind of organized knowledge is already there, we want to exploit it. The proper information properly accessible , that is the goal.

Example

A semantic layer on top the 'normal' results is presented. A graph is shown of a semantic web. It needs to become more useful for users, according to Antoine. A common concept that can aggregate for relations. A screen shot is given of the prototype. It is a mini-version of the total project: three museums are currently represented. You can start typing your search. The first difference (from normal search engine red) is that it will be able to provide you with concepts and locations that could match your string. If you select one of the results , you get a number of new possible links and clusters via criteria. It is important to notice that the results are coming from really specific entities. We can see that the subject "egypt" for example gives a whole set of related objects. It is much more than a returned string.

This idea of having controlled entities can be used in more complex means. Users can start exploring further knowledge and concepts. An example is given on the search "egypt' and the

meta results. We are now searching via concept/relations. This is an example of richer information. I also got clusters like works created by somebody who was in Egypt and so on… The reason for getting this object in the results is that in the metadata links back to the subject (query). There is a kind of person space emergent here. Via this person, we can find out the place and we end up in Cairo. One very important point is that we benefit from existing models and vocabularies. Via labels on concepts, these concepts can be linked. It is very important because now you can access this information. We continue by determining these links (exact matches and relational matches). The main advantage of metadata is that it is heterogeneous. There a different description models. You cannot really anticipate it. Some form of alignment is required in order for the system to work, because these databases use different vocabularies. A data cloud is presented which represents the different vocabularies in the three different museums. These vocabularies are glued together.

Conclusions
The semantics in our case are getting structure in the data. It is about coupling the data.. It is a flexible architecture. It is about loading data. This makes ingestion for new data easy. You don't need to fully merge the workings of all the institutions/ content providers. It is about connecting structures together. It allows easier access to the different vocabularies. You can start your search and you are provided with different vocabularies. Next, we have to bring in more vocabularies. You can have quality data in this system. Finally, this vision of the variable links model is nice, but some semantic matching level problems occur. This is difficult. A link is given: here you can try the portal here

Questions
Rogers: Don't you need an army if you want to actually make the links and translation between all the records?
Isaac: you are right, we actually implemented something (the three museums vocabularies), we are not experts on library science. Until recently, however, the library scientist did not come out of their institutions. Now, they start to realize they can integrate their knowledge. I believe this is an added value.
Rogers: Is this more than digitizing library systems? Is this indexible by Google?
Isaac: Yes, it should be.
Rogers: is it deep indexible? isn't this a huge policy question?
Isaacs: This prototype publishes the data. You can see the source of the data.
Pembleton: analogy: Tim Bernes-Lee created a website that can point to all your data. What I see here is the- same move. By linking the concepts, not the data. This provides a richer web.
Rogers: Is this a Europe-island web, then?
Cramer: We already have such a system: it is called RSS.
Audience: A method that I see here is: we need glue to link existing concepts and vocabularies. The other is to generate new vocabularies . To me that seems to be a large debate.
Pembleton: We use the same underlying technology. I see more added value rather than competition.
Cramer: RDFA is not a vocabulary, it is a language to format the vocabulary (which is a huge difference).

Michael Stevenson presents a Google art expose
Posted: November 16, 2009 at 4:15 pm | By: rosa menkman | Tags: art, Google

Michael Stevenson is a lecturer and PhD candidate at the Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam. For the Society of the Query evening program he presented a very interesting selection of artistic and activist projects that were engaged with (the re-attribution of) different elements related to Web search.

Query

The IP-Browser (Govcom.org) for instance played with the linearity of querying the Web. It creates an alternative browsing experience that foregrounds the Web's machine habitat and returns the user back to the basics of orderly Web browsing. The IP Browser looks up your IP address, and allows you to browse the Websites in your IP neighborhood, one by one in the order in which they are given in the IP address space.

Shmoogle (Tsila Hassine/De Geuzen) also deals with linearity on the Web, specifically the linearity of the search returns of Google. De Geuzen state that the best search returns that Google offers are not necessarily always the ones at the top. Unfortunately this is where the average Google user gets stuck. Shmoogle offers a way to find the search results in a chaotic way, and in doing so it ensures greater democracy.

The Internet Says No (Constant Dullaart) is a animated, fully functioning Google page (Google is placed in a marquee-frame). this work offers a pessimistic way to surf the internet.

The Misspelling-Generator (Linda Hilfling & Erik Borra). Erik Borra presented the work as a result of the fight against internet censorship. When doing a search in the Chinese version of Google on the Tiananmen Square Massacre, Linda Hilfling discovered a temporary loophole out of the Google self-censorship in China. By deliberately spelling Tiananmen incorrectly, she was taken to web-pages where other people had misspelled Tiananmen, and was thereby able to access pictures of demonstrations as well as the legendary image of the student in front of the tank through the sources of incorrect spellings. The Misspelling generator is a tool that can be used for internet activism. By writing variations like 'tianamen' and 'tiananman' the isolation politics of the Google's spelling corrector can be subverted while Google' selfcensorship can be circumvented.

Z.A.P. (ApFab) is an automatic image generation installation. First you add a word using the ApFab touch-screen, then the ZapMachine will grab an image from the Internet. This image is the most important visual representation of that word, at that time, according to the current Internet authority Google. Finally, the individual images are incorporated into a new context, creating a new tense state of meaning and random relations. With "Zapmachine: Who gave you the right?" AbFab is asking the following questions:
-How much control do we have over the generated collage as artists?
-How much influence do you have on this process.
-How does the collage relate to the initial intention by which the image was uploaded on the Internet by the original author?
-Who is the author of this Zap collage?

Disease Disco (Constant Dullaart) "To every suffering its thumbnail". Dullaart used the Google image search by color option, to query the word 'disease' and changes color 'rhytmically'. The

work is accompanied by the US billboard #1 hit song of the moment that the work was created.

The Global Anxiety Monitor (De Geuzen) uses html-frames to display automated image searches in different languages. Searching in Google for terms such as conflict, terrorism and climate change, this monitor traces the ebb and flow of fear in Arabic, Hebrew, English and Dutch.

Terms & Conditions

Cookie Monster (Andrea Fiore) To capture on-line behavior, thousands of HTTP cookies are sent daily to web browsers to identify users and gather statistical knowledge about tastes and habits. The cookie consensus website hosts a collection of cookies that Andrea Fiore received while surfing through the first 50 entries of the *Alexa directory of News sites.* In the future it will also host a software that will give the users the capability to create their own cookie collections.

I Love Alaska (Lernert Engelberts & Sander Plug) is a beautifully framed internet movie series that tells the story of a middle aged woman living in Houston, Texas. The viewer follows her AOL search queries over the time span of months. "In the end, when she cheats on her husband with a man she met online, her life seems to crumble around her. She regrets her deceit, admits to her Internet addiction and dreams of a new life in Alaska."

http://www.geuzen.org/anxiety/

Ton van het Hof (NL) about flarf poetry

Posted: November 16, 2009 at 3:02 pm | By: rosa menkman | Tags: art, cut-up, flarf, Google, poetry

Flarf poetry can be characterized as an avant-garde poetry movement of the late 20th and the early 21st century. In flarf poetry a poet roams the Internet using random word searches, to distill newly created phrases and bizarre constructions that he later shares with the flarf community.

Flarf poetry can be described as a 'readymade', collage technique that has connections to the Surrealists in the 20s and William Burroughs cut-up technique from 1959. Flarf itself exists for a decade and has since then evolved by using web poetry generators and chatbots like Jabberwacky.

Ton van het Hof showed an example of flarf by Sharen Mesmer: "A knowing diabetic bitch"

This is my Readymade Flarf poem using Jabberwacky:

What is Flarf? The greatest two dimensional thing in the world. What is Flarf? A Flatland. It's a satire on this one.

Although my self made poem doesn't show this so well (I am unfortunately an amateur flarf poet), flarf poems are often as disturbing as they are hilarious, which have made many people question if flarf will can ever be taken serious. Even though this question is still a valid question today, the movement is showing signs to have cleared a spot amongst the ranks of the legitimate art forms, finding its ways to blogs, magazines and conferences.

Discussion session 2: Googlization

Posted: November 16, 2009 at 12:16 am | By: tjerk timan | Tags: Andrew Keen, esther weltevrede, Googlization, Lev Manovich, Martin Feuz, Richard Rogers, Siva Vaidhyanathan

With: Siva Vaidhyanathan, Martin Feuz and Esther Weltevrede
Moderated by Andrew Keen.

Moderator: Why does no one talk about money?

Vaidhyanathan: Google only loses money. They have an interest to keeping people interacting with the Web. As long as you are interacting with the web, they can track you via cookies and that puts more data in their database. It is a clear but third degree connection for creating revenue. It also has interest in data- and text accumulation. It hopes to create a real text-based search. In terms of Google search; global and local are not really put to for example; Google books. This already biases the search results.

Weltevrede: It also depends on your perspective on Google. For me it is interesting to see how it works. How does it organize and present the information we get.

Vaidhyanathan: nobody is going to Google for the ads.

Audience (at Weltevrede): you were depending on the Google translation results? Isn't that tricky?

Weltevrede: indeed, Google Translate is still in beta version. However, *human rights* is such an important term that one can assume that it is translated well.

Audience: how about methods? It is difficult to pose yourself against the machine. All of us here agree that searching sucks and that Google is bad and commercial. So I'd like to have

some reflection on methods in order to be critical against searching and how they relate to your research?

Vaidhyanathan: Google is hard to study in traditional way. I do my best to keep to fuzzy, flabby arguments of narrative and argument. Opacity is the problem of Google. You cannot research is without using it. You risk becoming a banned user. You have to warn Google about your research, in which you may alter the results.

Weltevrede. I agree, I want to add that you can study the inner workings by looking at output, you can tell a lot about that

Feuz: it is an attempt to look at temporal relations: You have to try and fund ways to be able to ask these questions.

Moderator; What I do not understand is the connection between the most opaque company ever which are still fetishing transparency.

Vaidhyanathan: it does not fetishize it; it leverages it. We do the work for Google, we provide the information and content Marx would scream at this notion. We are all very happy to do it (user-generated content). It is a better environment than we used to. However, we have to grasp the workings. Maybe we are very content with our relation to Google.

Weltevrede: it is also what building tools you can get out of Google. You can make use of the giant – building on Google; let Google work for us again.

Manovich (audience): I have difficulty to see your (Feuz's and Weltevrede's) results as research. What is the sample size? Where is the statistical data? You haven't looked at the interdependencies of the variables? So what kind of science is this? If these things are not clear, these results are not meaningful.

Feuz: there is a difference between types of research. In the kind of research I did, I worked 4 month in a team gathering data. The amount of data we needed was already overwhelmingly large. You have to keep in mind that the thing is really temporal.

Vaidhyanathan (at Manovich): Is it not very expensive what you do? How can you do this?

Manovich: Most things are done in open source software and only takes five minutes.

Rogers (audience): Responds to the question by Manovich on what kind of science this is: it is diagnostics! Are local Googles furnishing local sources? It is a kind of critical diagnostics to see how Google works, and to see at the implications.

Manovich: Is it then issue exploration to be followed by hypothesis?

Moderator: I live in Silicon Valley, There is more skepticism there about Google. They cannot fight the real-time twitter economy. What is the relevancy of Google right now? What are your thoughts about this? Will it remains strong?

Vaidhyanathan: I am very bad at predicting. For the sake of my book, I hope they stay relevant? The rapid changes of Google have made me realize I must not write about current companies anymore. You have to keep in mind, though, that the real time web is not that

connected (yet). So much of what Google tries to do is to satisfy the Cosmo-elite because this group makes the choices and the critics. What are the initiatives that Google has in India, China and Brazil? That is a more relevant development to look into.

Feuz; we researchers cannot cope with the patterns of change – they can adopt fast, so they will survive.

Esther Weltevrede: "The Globalisation Machine. Reinterpreting engine results"

Posted: November 16, 2009 at 12:07 am | By: tjerk timan | Tags: digital methods initiative, DMI, esther weltevrede

Lecture by Esther Weltevrede
As a follow up on Martin's talk, I am going to present some empirical works. These project concern comparing engine results and customization of location. The aim of this study is:
1) Building on Googlization theory and search engine critique.
2) Empirical study. Reinterpreting Google for localization studies.

The key question is: What type of globalization machine is Google?

In this light, a couple of cases will be presented. Weltevrede starts by posing that PageRank is Googles way into the information environment. In an article published in 1998/1999 (?) PageRank is mentioned as the global ranking system for all pages, specifically designed for all the info of the world. Although Google states that they use a large number of variables, PageRank is primarily based on the link. The question of this research is: When Google moves to the local, what happens to the local results? What if we look at some services that are local:

A case:

Google "Amsterdam" and you get (respectively) red light, airport, coffee shops. This same query in Google.nl returns another set of results (arena, forest, tournament). Local domain Google is another method of localization (e.g. Google.de). There are 157 local Googles. The key variables are (as far as can be distilled: Google is not very transparent in providing this information):

- IP address
- top level domain
- webmasters page

If you visit one of these Googles (say, Google.be), you can also select pages from that locale (only provide me with result from Belgium, for instance). If you select this option, you get local results according to Google. Also, we notice that this particular Google is recommended in three languages (French, Dutch and German, in this case). Another way that Google returns local results is via 'region" and of course a yellow-page kind of search is offered via Google maps. In answering what we can say about the type of machine Google is, Weltevrede states that it thinks globally and acts locally.

The first case study:

Local and international information sources. Research question: to what extend can the local domain Google present local results? Method used: query all the national Googles in their official languages. Then, in Google Translate, the search term is translated. The second step is to geo- locate sources. Instead of choosing for host, we looked at registration of the website. This is a more precise indication of who owns the website. The top ten results for the query "human rights".

A picture is shows about the results. The selected national Google is Canada:

This map indicates that Canada has relatively many local results for 'human rights'. We can also look at what the top results are globally. The UN is by far the largest source in the list. When we looked at the results more closely, the declaration of human rights keeps popping up. Often websites have translated the declaration in all languages they all call upon this source (On e can interpret this as a way of SEO) .

Next, a ranked tag cloud is shown.

We looked at these sources and blue- tagged sources contain the declaration of human rights. Next, a rank list of all countries queried is given. 40 % of all national Googles do not get any local results. If you look at the type list, you see that Europe leads the list, while at the lower end it is mostly African and Middle- Eastern countries. We can see that the local domain does not mean that you receive local information sources. How then are local results defined? Is it maybe language? A search is done on all Arabic countries. This shows a language web – a shared language space. Does that mean that there are no local sources? In Lebanon, the term "human rights" again is queried. While this does return results, these results do not make it to the top. Local sources are on the second page and beyond.
In order to test this claim (language) we looked at a geographical regions defined by languages: Europe is chosen due to its local and distinct languages. The visual below shows they have very local sources (Again indicated by black domain names). The EU- Googles hardly share sources – characterized by their local sources. This can be argued as a being a language web.

We now move to the last example: comparing two Portuguese speaking sources. Portugal compared to Brazil: Here we might conclude that the established local sources are privileged. Language webs prefer over local webs.

Selection: Brazil   Selection: Portugal

Search engine literacy (2nd case study)
We can use Google to read society; we have a particular way of interpreting search engine results. One example method: reading domain names and their main issues. Again, the example of human rights is used here. If we query this, we see a very established result list, where sources are relatively fixed. What happens when we query for a more dynamic topic? In this case a query is done on RFID in 2004; back then, this was a young space. We see sources competing for the top. Compared to the human rights space, it has rather young and technology-minded sites; the build- up of the list is really different. Another method for research is to look at issues returned:

Query: RFID
Google.com
23 August 2004
source: Rogers 2009

A third case study:

A query for "rights' is performed. What is the top ten list of rights per country? The total list as shown. This research required reading and interpreting languages by the team members. The top ten of prominent rights in local domains were collected and visualized. The total image is shown.

The color code – blue rights are shared, while the black ones are culturally specific for domains.

If we zoom in, we see that in Italy, the unique rights are the right to forger and the right to nationality. In Japan, they have computer programming rights, for instance. In Australia, you have specifically man's rights One favorite: Finland's every-mans right to freedom to roam in nature. If we are to draw conclusion from this case study, they would be: the globalizing machine can show the shared as well as the locally specific. Google is localizing, regional, nation and local, showing shared and specific. Local results does not mean local sources. Also, different regions on the web are offered, mostly via language.

For more information, see Govcom.org and Digital Methods Initiative. DMI Project page on The Nationality of Issues. Repurposing Google for Internet Research.

[Photos from Society of the Query Conference](#)

Posted: November 15, 2009 at 11:33 pm | By: anne helmond | Tags: [photos](#), [sotq](#)

Conference visitors

Richard Rogers, University of Amsterdam

Conference Venue: Trouw Gebouw, Amsterdam

Florian Cramer

Siva Vaidhyanathan


Conference crew and speakers

Konrad Becker Book Presentation: Deep Search. The politics of Search Beyond Google

Evening Program
Photography by Anne Helmond. More pictures on Flickr.

Lev Manovich: Studying Culture With Search Algorithms

Posted: November 15, 2009 at 8:13 pm | By: chris castiglione | Tags: cultural analysis, cultural analytics, Edward Shanken, Lev Manovich, Richard Rogers, Siva Vaidhyanathan
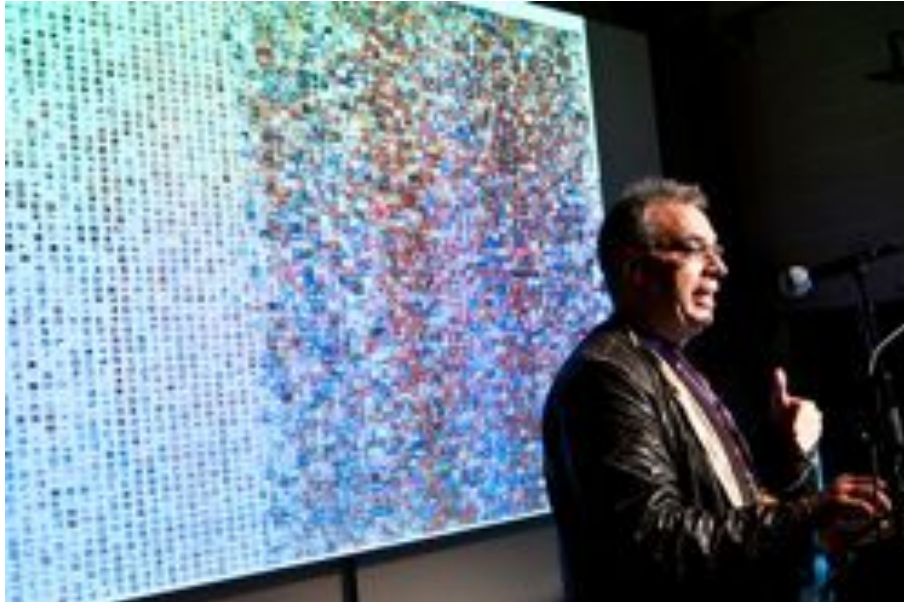

New media theorist Lev Manovich summarized his latest contribution to the field of software studies: *cultural analytics*. The idea of cultural analytics was first presented by Lev Manovich in 2005, and in 2007 he released a paper at CALIT2 entitled "Cultural Analytics: Analysis and Visualization of Large Cultural Data Sets." In his talk today Manovich routinely made comparisons between *cultural analytics* and *cultural analysis*, and so it was necessary that audience members understand the distinction between these two (similarly sounding) terms: whereas traditional *cultural analysis* relies on real-world resources (human interpretation and physical storage), *cultural analytics* relies on the computer and search algorithms in order to discern and interpret culture.

Within cultural analytics Manovich is looking to answer questions such as: Can we create quantitative measures of cultural innovation? Can we visualize flows of cultural ideas, images, and trends? As a new way to study culture he suggested, "Let's take principles from search engines (and data analysis in general) + web analytics and Google Trends (interactive visualization of patterns) + Google Earth (continuous zoom and navigation) + Manyeyes (visualization, sharing of data and analysis)."

Manovich's work is perhaps more easily understood through examples that implement these techniques. He presented the "Interactive Visualization of Image Collections for Humanities Research" project which was developed by Manovich and the Software Studies Institute at UC San Diego. The project explores a collection of Mark Rothko's paintings: turning the paintings into sets of data that can be graphed, and then turning that data into a collection of paintings (see the video below). Manovich argued, "by extracting and graphing this data it will help us understand patterns and explore trends in a painter's life and work."

This visualization shows changes in Rothko's painting's average brightness over his career.
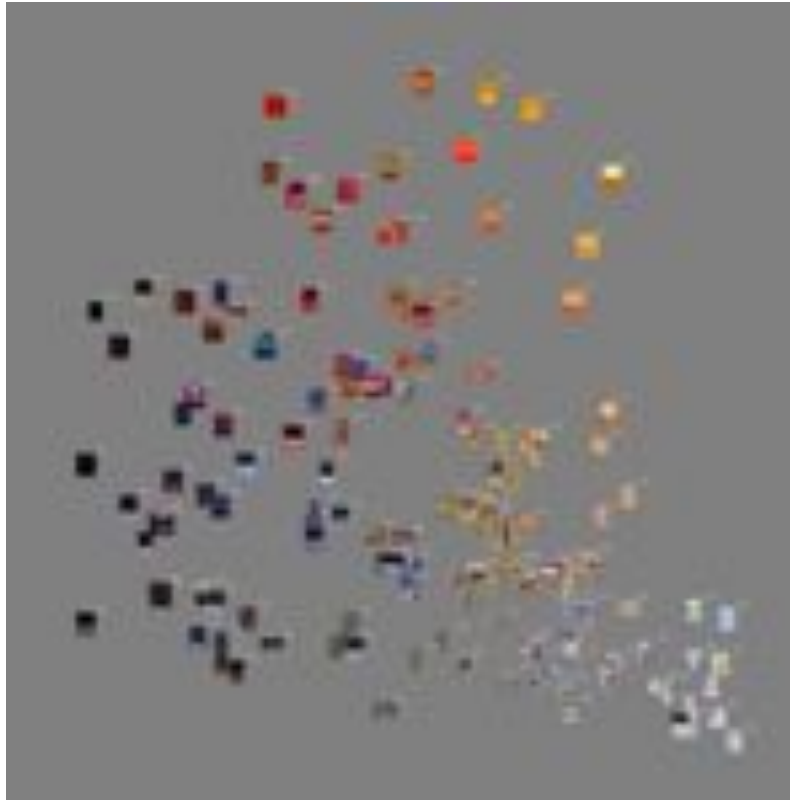
This visualization organizes the paintings by their brightness and saturation:
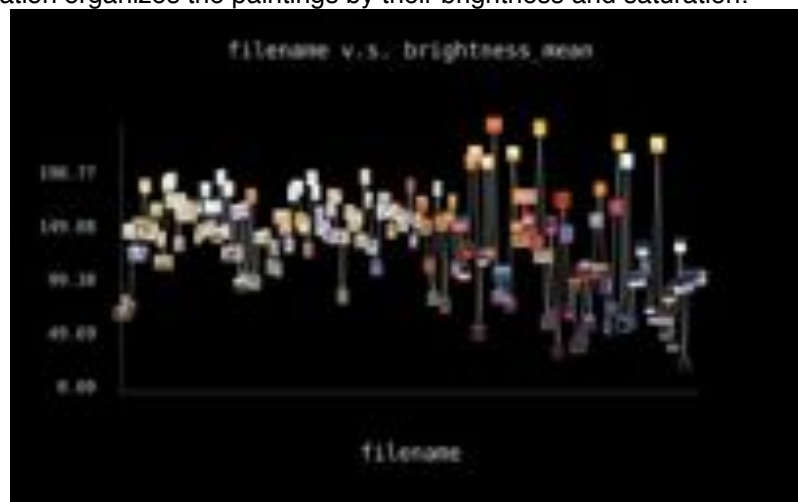
Manovich spoke in Amsterdam last May at the Paradiso to which his presentation on cultural analytics raised a great deal criticism [1] [2]. Shortly after his last talk professor and art historian Edward Shanken wrote the following on The University of Amsterdam blog, "The outcome of the analysis was as underwhelming as the method was problematic. The challenges of accurately capturing the color and tone of a painting in digital form and then representing them on a monitor are well known. The challenges of comparing multiple paintings on monitors is all the more complicated. While there may be insights to be gained by such a method – and I'm not sure how relevant they would be even in the best of circumstances – it appears to be limited to only the most superficial formal aspects of a painting. And while certain aspects of connoisseurship may be aided by computer analysis of high-resolution digital images, Manovich's example was far from that. What do we learn about Rothko or about art in general from an analysis of the brightness in his work over time? Why even bother posing that as a research question?"
This morning Shanken politely asked Manovich,

Your work enables us to ask questions we might have not seen before, but could you tell us more about the particlar insights that this type of data has shown?

Manovich answered,

Every time I make visualizations I see something I have not seen before. The most common ideas about culture get challenged.

He went on to display the following graphic entitled "Seeing How We Play" and commented, "This visualization compares interactivity in ten video games over two decades. It shows very clearly what the relation is per game is: interactive vs. non-interactive times, and patterns of rapid changes."

Richard Rogers, Director of the University of Amsterdam's Digital Methods Initiative, poignantly followed up,

Have you been Googlized? A lot of critics say Google has taken over industry, over industry. E.g. libraries. Is Google now taking over humanities?

To which Manovich replied,

Good question. It's not only Google, it's general ideas and methods. We re-use and apply them for cultural analytics. At the same time we want to understand the methods so we can critique them better.

Later in the day at the Googlization panel Siva Vaidhyanathan asked Manovich a question that many of us were probably wondering,

Isn't what you do expensive? It's more than I've seen in any humanities lab…EVER!.

Of course the question was in reference to the 287-Megapixel HIPerSpace Wall seen early in Manovich's presentation, but either Manovich didn't completely understand or was trying to avert the question with his short reply,

I do most of my work with my laptop using open-source software.

Whether you agree or disagree with his cultural analytics research, Manovich's allure is that his ideas are often compelling and provocative. He recently released a digital copy of his upcoming book "Software Takes Command" on his website where more information about Lev Manovich and the Software Studies Institute is also available.

Florian Cramer on "Why Semantic Search is Flawed"

Posted: November 15, 2009 at 1:01 pm | By: liliana bounegru | Tags: florian cramer, semantic search, semantic web, Web 2.0, web archive | 2 Comments

Florian Cramer, head of the Networked Media Master at the [Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam](#),
ended the last session of *The Society of the Query* conference. The Alternative Search 2
session presented a few of the latest web technologies as potential directions for the web and
search engine design in the near future: RFDa, which would make the shift to what [Steven
Pemberton](#) named the web 3.0, and semantic search, as implemented in the [Europeana
project](#).

Florian Cramer concluded this series of presentations with a critical and somewhat
pessimistic evaluation of the current state of the web and the idea of a semantic web and
semantic search, as one of its potential futures. His three main arguments revolved around:
"why search is not just web search (and not just Google)," "why semantic search is flawed,"
and "why the world wide web is broken."

The first point expressed his frustration with the narrow understanding of the notions of query
and search engine on which the conference focused. As he explains, wikis and social
networking sites also include the search engine functionalities.

As far as semantic search is concerned, Cramer usefully pointed out to the difference
between folksonomies, the currently used form of semantic tagging, and the universal
semantic tagging which a semantic web would require. While folksonomies are "unsystematic,
ad-hoc, user-generated and site-specific tagging systems," ([Cramer, 2007](#)), like the tagging
systems of [Flickr](#) for example, the semantic web would require a structured, universal tagging
and classification system which would apply to the entire web. Cramer is skeptical of the
possibility to create this unified, 'objective', meta-tagging system because classifications, or
taxonomies, are not arbitrary but expressions of ideologies, which would call for the
discussion of the politics of meta-tagging. While meta-tagging may have its advantages, such
as arguably empowering the web users and weakening the position of large web services
corporations, although still maintaining the necessity of search engines to aggregate data, it
also has several potential weaknesses. The semantic web model must be based on trust in
order to prevent some predictable problems, such as massive spamming.

In the concluding section, Cramer expressed his concern that the Internet as a medium for
publication and information storage is not sustainable and argued for redundancy in web
archiving. However this desire for permanence raises questions about the nature of the
medium itself.

[Steve Pemberton – „Have your own website!"](#)

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 7:21 pm | By: dennis deicke | Tags: [RDF](#), [Steven Pemberton](#), [Web 2.0](#), [Web 3.0](#) | [4 Comments](#)

[Steve Pemberton](#) starts off with explaining the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which proposes a link between langauge and thought. If you do not have a word for something, you cannot think about it, and if you do not think about it, you will probably not invent a word for it. Pemberton applies this idea to the term of "Web 2.0″, which has been created by a publisher who wanted to organize some conferences about the idea that websites achieve value by users transferring their data to them. But the concept of Web 2.0 already existed in the Web 1.0 era, namely in the form of ebay. Nowadays, when we can utilize the established concept of the Web 2.0 one can talk about and discuss this phenomena.

In his speech he suggests that people should have their own machine readable websites instead of giving their data to middlemen and mediators as the model of Web 2.0 requires it. According to Pemberton the problem is that the network-organization the Web 2.0 separates the web into several sub-webs. Referring to [Metcalfe's Law](#) Pemberton states that this separation reduces the value of the web as a whole.

Additionally he mentions further problems prevailing in regards to the Web 2.0. First of all using Web 2.0 applications like social networks and photo-sharing sites forces you to log in to certain kind of organization, you have to adapt to their data format to be able to publish and work on your contents, which is equipollent to a certain commitment. Subsequently there is the question about the case of deletion or closure of your account or even the death of the network (like mp3.com, Google video, Jaiku, Magnolia). One has to rely on the provider that he keeps your account running, so that the data and the work you have put into it do not get lost. Facebook for example closed a woman's account because they decided that an uploaded picture showing her breastfeeding is totally inappropriate.

The crucial point of Pemberton's view is that we need personal webpages which have to be readable by machines, so that the sites can be scanned and used by an along coming aggregator. According to him the solution to enable machine readable sites is the format [RDFa](#), which Pemberton refers to as the [„CSS](#) of meaning" and which represents the incarnation of the Web 3.0. The advantage of RDFa is that it joins together different data automatically, things do not have to be joined together because RDFa already linked data together from different places. Futhermore Pemberton states that the usage of machine readable sites has several advantages for users. For example the browser can provide the user with better experiences, if it is able to identify addresses and dates it could directly offer the possibility to find it on the map or inscribe it to the calendar.

Daniel van der Velden (NL): "We need an alternative, dynamic search engine to complement Googlekea"

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 6:51 pm | By: rosa menkman | |

Peripheral Forces: On the Relevance of Marginality in Networks
Daniel van der Velden is a is designer and researcher. He organized the Quaero (Latin for 'I seek') event at the Jan van Eyck in 2007 and has been working on alternative interfaces for search results, to move away from the 'top-10-search-result-experience', and to create new search options and visualizations. At Society of the Query, Daniel is speaking on behalf of the design collective Metahaven.

His talk starts with the song "Drive By Hit", by the music group 'The Search Engines'. The Search Engines' song on Myspace illustrates the fading distinction between search engines and social networking sites. More and more these different *intranets* deal with one particular problem: how to become and stay a main source of information within 'the growing pool' of information sources.
Daniel's talk is the result of a thesis that was developed at both the Quaero conference and the following discussions during the 3 months of research that lead up to the ISEA 2008 exhibition in Singapore. In this thesis Daniel (and Metahaven) stated that the authoritative sources of print have been exchanged for socially powerful, nodal publishers. This form of power is built on social ties, that replace the old fashioned hierarchical authority. Moreover, the system of 'peer review' has been exchanged for a social 'peer pressure' of linking (nodes feeling the pressure to link to nodes that consent or correspond to their own opinions), which makes most linked nodes redundant. The interesting challenges to any idea, notion or argument are insteas developed in the sphere that is exists outside the center, in a periphery or bailie. These are often not directly connected to the statement and exist isolated as isolated worlds away from the powerful, reigning opinion. Metahaven wants to develop a search engine that connects these different spheres, to provide different points of views on particular issues and be able to put emphasis on the marginal forces.
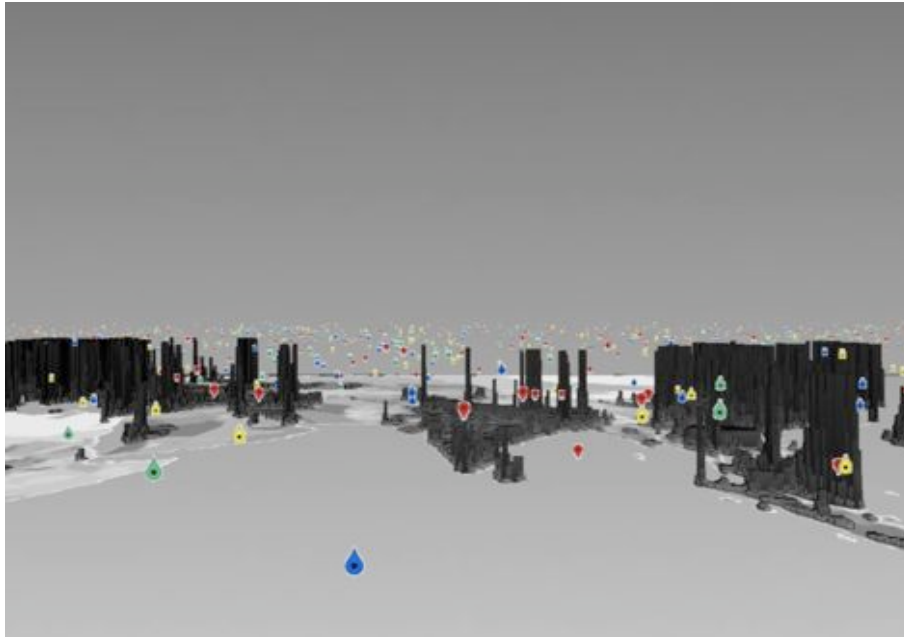
Daniel van der Velden states that we need a new world political map that takes the changing, globally distributed power relations into account. The biggest question concerning this statement is what such a map would look like (probably dynamic), and how different forms of power can be registered in such a map?
The internet as a finite architectural object, as is reflected by the data centers, the 'dark fiber' networks, is actually a real terrain that is not vague at all. They are real geophysical terrains. the physicality is actually finite. Metahaven would like to argue for a political map that would reveal the networks of power to generate a better oversight of where information exists, to connect these different worlds of information and the geographical world as we know it. They want to open the black boxes of cloud computing.

Such a map would also make clear that our use of Google is quite alike the way we drink Coca Cola. We like the sweet taste of Cola, so we keep on drinking it, but in fact we have no idea about its contents. According to Daniel Google is also very much like Ikea, a firm that provides us with furniture and other tools that are created only to be used in one way. This furniture cannot be changed, or expanded upon for different usage. He concludes that we need to be more aware of Googlekia.

Ingmar Weber: "Free the Query Logs!"
Posted: November 14, 2009 at 5:31 pm | By: morgan currie | Tags: Ingmar Weber, ranking, Yahoo research

With Google seeping into every nook of the conference – the subject, direct or indirect, of most presentations and discussions – you might ask why Google isn't here to speak for itself. Unfortunately and unsurprisingly, the company makes it very difficult for staff to speak at events (look at how rarely they attend the industry's largest conferences: SIGIR, WSDM, WWW.)

Lucky for us here at Society of the Query, we've got a company rep in the house, Ingmar Weber, a search engine researcher from Yahoo! Weber rounded out yesterday's discussion with his lecture "It's Hard to Rank Without Being Evil: where evil means big centralized and keeping track of a huge query log." Chock full of metaphors linking data to wealth, his talk proposed an alternative search engine of the future that makes query logs a free public resource.

What's a query log? Let's say you're a designer like Weber and want to pioneer this alternate search engine. First you'd consider ranking, or how to organize, prioritize, and filter the web's data. You could rank a few ways: by document content, such as a word and where it appears on a page, the most basic ingredient of a search; or by hyperlink structure, using a giant webcrawl to discern hits and inlinks – essentially votes – from other websites. Or you could use query logs. Query logs are quality votes; they show that users who search for x always click on y. They also show relations between pages – page y and z are clicked by the same user. A search engine could use this implicit relevance feedback to infer what people like and direct them there.

Over time, a log of individual search actions becomes powerful resource, a goldmine of data. Put it all together, and we could find out flu patterns or fine tune election predictions, or discover what local bar most people like. But there's a paradox: if you're using search data to build a search engine from scratch, you'd need to pull that data from some other, pre-existing search engine. And currently there is no access to major search engines' query logs. Companies hoard their logs like misers sitting on mounds of gold.

There are other such hidden mounds of gold, or 'information silos,' as Weber terms them. Mobility data from mobile phones for instance, could tell us where people are at all times. This would be useful to predict traffic jams, for one. Also shopping basket information, held by credit card companies and stores, could tell us what people are buying, where and when. Imagine a real time snapshot of the amount of junk food consumed.

Weber wants to know if we can unlock these silos and chase the misers away, but still respect obvious privacy issues and potential abuses. How can we all contribute to the query log but protect ourselves from intrusions or misuse of our personal data?

Weber offered a few current examples, such as Ippolita's SCookies, a site that swaps cookies among Google users; you offer up search information but SCookies makes it anonymous. Data sharing without the creepiness factor. What other legal and technical innovations could open up massive querying data for the public good? There's no answer yet. But who knows what Weber's cooking up when he's outside the office.

Christophe Bruno – The transmutation of language into a global market

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 3:52 pm | By: dennis deicke | Tags: art, Christophe Bruno, language

French artist Christophe Bruno introduced the audience into some aspects of his art concerning search engines, espacialy Google. In order to explain his latest project *Dadameter*, he initially presented a selection of projects he has worked on over the last years. His career as an aritst started with the project *Epiphanies* which Bruno established in 2001. It is a Google hack collecting pieces of texts and reconstituting these particular pieces in a new structure. This idea was inspired by James Joyce who walked through Dublin writing down phrase fragments he heard on the streets and called those epiphanies, therefore Bruno calls Google an „ephiphany machine".

Another project of Bruno is *Fascinum* from 2001. In this project Bruno developed a program searching through Yahoo! news sites of different countries and select and present those pictures which were looked at the most in each country. In a work of 2002 called *Adwords Happening*, Bruno depicted the development of a generalized semantic capitalism. He started buying different words at Google's AdWords application and presented the price of different words, this creates the awareness that via Google any word of any language has a price and can be bought.
Bruno identified that corporate organizations started to highjack methods formerly applied by conceptual artists and called it „Guerilla Marketing". This was the origin of a famous work of 2004 called *Human Browser*, in which persons were verbally displaying search results to other people which were transferred to them in realtime via ear-phones, the individual human being then embodies the world wide web. *Logo.Hallucination* is a different project of Christophe Bruno in which he scans through pictures circulating in the internet and searches for logos of corporations and organizations that are represented in those pictures. If a logo is detected in a picture Logo.Hallucination automatically sends cease and desist emails complaining about the violation of copyright laws. This selection shows steps leading to Christophe Bruno's newest project, the *Dadameter*. It is inspired by the work of the french author Raymond Rousse and is a very ambitious and complex project which cannot be summarized easily, the aim is the production of a map displaying our distance to dada. Due to its complexity it is highly recommended to look up the details about the project here: Detailed information about the Dadameter.

Society of the Query on Google Wave

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 3:52 pm | By: chris castiglione | Tags: Google, Google Wave, sotq

Notes and discussion on The Society of the Query are public on Google Wave:
You can find them here:
with:public "Notes on Society of the Query"

Alessandro Ludovico: "The Google paradigm: for the final dictator it is never enough"

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 3:04 pm | By: tjerk timan | Tags: Alessandro Ludovico, Allesandro Ludovico, Google paradigm

Introduction by Sabine Niederer
Alessandro Ludovico – fresh issue of neural is out, with Yesman on the cover, so promising. Alessandro is a media researcher, media critic, and also a new media artist. He is famous by the work "Google will eat itself". Also known for the "Amazon Noir" project.

Alessandro

Thanks a lot for invitation: I will continue with Google discussion, the theories that came out from GWEI project. This project was done by 4 different people; Alessandro was in charge of the theories. "I want to talk about the GWEI project and about unexpected problems we encountered after this art project. Also I will talk about the Google self referential side. I will try to prove that Google can become/ will establish its role as a public service". Therefore the title of the talk is: "The Google paradigm: for the final dictator it is never enough"

Google establishes monopolies via their pervasiveness, coolness, and attracting functionality. They are error-proof and have an accelerated innovation rate where the word antitrust sounds unattractive.

Google does this by establishing rules that are flexible. Internally, their organizational motto of 'freedom" turns out to be very effective. Externally, products are light and convincing. As an example, contextual advertisement is mentioned. Their services are funny and attractive. They make up for a large part of Internet and they want to entertain us forever. There are options to debunk their perfect level of marketing, communication and strategies in our mass-based economy.

About the Google-will-eat-itself project (GWEI)

We started with principally focusing on Google's way of online marketing. The analysis is that all corporations have to make cultural interfaces in order to have or create a capitol of attention. This becomes more and more precious. As Cory Doctorow stated: we are in an era of distraction.

We created an affective hack by establishing fake websites. This website(s) pretended to be about eCommerce and online marketing. These fake websites were aggregating marketing news websites. After a while, we submitted and subscribed to the Google AdSense program. For those who do not know AdSense: it lets you have textual and visual adds. Google pays money for every click on such an add. What we did then with the ads was that we opened a Swiss bank account that was linked to Google Shares (latest price). So, AdSense income was linked to buying Google shares. Alessandro now shows the actual account (not allowed to show in public, but we will do it anyways). It shows your earnings for every click. Google was giving us the money to buy itself (hence Google will eat itself). Why a Swiss bank account? Because Google is worth more than all the Swiss banks together. Alessandro now shows pictures of the exhibition. The motto of this exhibition was: "lets share their shares". Google figured out our scheme after a while (via human and software tools they use) they mechanism. They started closing down our Google ads.

The software diagram is now showed. This software makes fraudulent clicks every time a visitor comes to site, sending Google the data as if the user had clicked on the advertisement. So, the software was simulating user behaviour. For us it was a scientific experiment. For me

personally, it was also interaction, it was questioning how to define a fraudulent click, because it is the same data as a permitted click would be. It is impossible to distinguish. Who decides that it is a fraudulent action? There is no CCTV on your mouse clicks – but just data from a computer to a computer. GWEI is conceptual artwork, not to practically take over Google. Summarized in a nice calculation: The rate is 23 million years to take over the Google shares (in this project).

Some interesting problems during and after the project
1) We were invited to a conference by Google in half moon bay, California. They said: "Hi guys, we want to learn about what you are doing? Can we arrange a talk?" After a while, they were repeatedly asking the technical details of the software we used and then they disappeared. Maybe the conference never existed.
2) We were approached by a journalist – the chief tech journalist of Reuters – and he was going to make an interview. He was asking Google about our project. Google replied: "We don't comment on any AdSense account. The journalist said: "Sorry, I don't have the counter story, so no interview. No further replies.
3) We were also approached by Wired magazine. They were opening an art department. For this first art department, they want to talk about the "GWEI" project. They were enthusiastic – we did an interview, we made colorful images and sent these images to Wired (page size). Then they killed the issue. It turned out Google had its influence even on Wired advertisement.
4) We were often approached on Skype by anonymous people. Alessandro now acts out such a Skype conversation:
Guy: hi
We: hi dear:
Guy: could get you into big trouble
Guy: it is against the law
We: yes, we know, do you know what they collect? So many things are against the law?
Guy: no, just want to know that you know what you are doing.
Guy: fraud is fraud, art or not
We: no we are not stealing. Also, art becomes history
Guy: the judge wont think so
We: we will take the risk
Guy: Ok, your choice, just wanted to inform you about the risk.
Of course, artists are hoping for these reactions. But it is also sort of a cliche – law firm that defends the big company. Google responded by saying: Oke, we understand its art, but you have to stop now. Of course we never did.

About the Porcelain interface of Google
It is so clean in its interface – everybody likes this interface and it is widely recognized – these interfaces are becoming standard. Clean, rounded, known. But the interface is impenetrable – that is porcelain. I was in Dublin for a lecture – somebody said to me that if I wanted, I could make a tour inside of Google. I did accept the invitation: in the belly of the beast, so to speak. I had the opportunity to look inside in Google and check the porcelain interface from within. Actually, the type of organization is a recurrent theme (freedom, young, cool to work there). You can see the colors inside the spaces in Google office in Dublin, They are always round-shaped, familiar. The brand is perceivable everywhere and in everything. Especially the G. It struck me. These four colors have influence in our visual life. Alessandro shows the logo of Google wave: it is rounded, smooth.

The Gateway
Beyond the browser interface there are other ways Google is spreading its interface. This gateway to Google becomes self-referential. If we look at Google as a dictator, then how can a dictator be fun for people? By influencing every choice we make? Google knows very well how to entertain Internet users. They periodically release new and effective services; people want them and more of them. It is not Microsoft-like monopoly. Rather, Google, uses their porcelain interface. It is shining and funny and everyone knows it; is familiar with it. Via this interface they are presenting themselves as a public serve. You buy a computer and then there is Google. Everything is light, easy and shining. Fast and undated, the cream of fun and the strawberry of results make the monopoly. The database of Google is very valuable. Most pages on the net are put through page rank algorithms. The website can be located and statistically analyzed; this is the secret dream of every Internet market incentive.
The point is that the user ignores all recorded data. They are hypnotized by interfaces and services. We are giving our data to Facebook without even thinking about it. But, unlike Facebook, this funny empire has another element: advertisement. It is its core business. Everyone can buy in on the AdSense program. Also, tons of people have become publishers. They accent to have ads in exchange for money via clicks. The final scenario is Google as the giant middleman, between advertisement and publishers and thereby sucks all information. Being in the middle, it makes the balance, but is it not a natural system, it is an economical system.

One example: Google mail
Established not because propaganda of 1 GB space, but the effective spam filter, you can be quite sure you can mail safely. Google don't want to fight spam, because it makes their killer app possible. Googles' mission: get info and make it accessible universal. This is comparable with the mission of the library of congress. But they are actually a public service. Google will never be. The book- scanning project is mentioned. The aim is to establish a public service. To be more precise: a privatized public service.
I will show a sarcastic video by onion. It is about the outcome of these services. A two minute-video about the opt-out village;
http://www.theonion.com/content/video/google_opt_out_feature_lets_users
Who can build a prison like that? Only a public space can do that.

Conclusions
The Google effect: creating constituent on new business. the greatest enemy of a giant is the parasite. Think about creating Google with itself manually. If a parasite would suck money, they will kill the giant. We have to start decoding and disposing these mechanisms. In order to create cult, we need to create antibodies to Google interfaces.

Questions
q:
How does competition show up in your analysis? We should also think about competition in companies and product. There are principles in these products by Google. It is a competition. Is web product logic in your analysis?
a: Competition is not abstract concept. Competition exists if there are comparable conditions. When you have gained the Google position of monopoly, there is competition anymore. They

have a very successful model os searching them expanding this condition, I cannot think about a real competitor of Google. They can really built new services – Google programming languages. It is not only comprehensive, but it is made by Google, so it was on every technology – it is building on its position. The program of Google is adding this position. I would push more on the cultural side. it s funny, we are pleased by Google. I am a little scared on the final step: becoming a public service (example of Google books). Disappearing of libraries: culturally we can accept a privatized public service. We should not be happy with that!

Cees Snoek – Concept based Video Search

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 11:54 am | By: dennis deicke | Tags: Cees Snoek, Video Search | 1 Comment

Cees Snoek, member of the Intelligent Systems Lab of the University of Amsterdam, talked about the future of video search. He starts by explaining how the traditional and familiar video search engines work: via text queries. But Snoek points out that an interface working with text queries is insufficient to produce satisfying results. This way of video searching may work if you have a simple query like „flower". Yet if you have a more complicated query like „Find shots of one or more helicopters in flight" the classical textbased search interface would not generate adequate results.

Furthermore he explains that the problem with picture or video search is that human beings as cognitive animals perceive semantic patterns when looking at something. This is an attribute computers do not have, and therefore Snoek speaks of a semantic gap between machines and human beings who have the ability to interpret what they perceive and transfer it into semantic patterns. The aspect that human visual perception is a very complex task which needs a big amount of ressources is supported by the fact that visual percipience needs 50% of our cognitive capacity, while playing chess only requires 5%. In his research Snoek tries to find a way to close the semantic and to find solutions to label and name the world's visual information.

Cees Snoek presents a modern form of semantic video search engine which is called MediaMill. In his model he provides the search engine with a huge amount of image fragments which can be connected with a particular search query. The engine then calculates every image oder video in regards to a lot of different distinguishing features as color, texture or shape. After this step the search engine determines a distinctive correlation between the particular distinguishing features and the search query supplied by the user. This analysis is the basis for a statistic model – the semantic concept detector – which can be used to search a database for other pictures fitting to this model (Example Video of Semantic Pathfinder).

The results found by this model are presented to the user by something Snoek introduces as a CrossBrowser (Example Video here). The vertical axis shows the parts of a video detected by the search engine, while the horizontal axis presents the timeline of specific video clip. Besides Cees Snoek also presents the VideOlympics, a contest where search engine researches compete in video searching. In front of a live audience different teams try to get the best results in video retrieval for a certain set of search queries (VideoOlympics showcase video).

The Ippolita Collective: Stop Questioning and Start Building!

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 10:06 am | By: liliana bounegru | Tags: cookies, digital civil rights, Google, Ippolita Collective

The Ippolita Collective brought a humorous and refreshing change of perspective into the attempt to search and formulate solutions for one of the issues addressed by the second session of the Society of the Query conference, namely Digital Civil Rights. They proposed to change the "what" style of questioning associated with positions of domination, as in "what is to be done?" into a "how" style of approaching issues in order to avoid surrendering to fear, paranoia or the desire to control and protect every aspect of your interactions with technology. While if you ask yourself the "what" questions you may end up in paranoid positions such as luddism or technocracy, if you have the "how" attitude, then you are a curious individual, with a desire to learn and to understand, to share and exchange knowledge with others. You may even be some sort of hacker.

The "how" attitude, an attitude which will bring you to media literacy, is, as the Ippolita Collective explains, a convivial model. As opposed to the industrial model of productivity, the convivial model implies maintaining autonomy, creativity and personal freedom in interaction with individuals or technology. How would one build up this model of conviviality? The answer, according to the artistic and research group is to build convivial tools! A convivial tool is not something that you can purchase but something that you have to build yourself in order to have it match your own needs. It is something that you enjoy creating, like making your own wiki.

Can the convivial attitude be applied in approaching our Google/ digital rights/ privacy issues? The Ippolita Collective already has, and the result is a tool named SCookies which you can download for free here. The application takes its slogan, "Share your Cookies!" literally and

mixes your cookies with the cookies of other individuals who have installed it, in order to alter your profile and render it unreliable. While it may not be <u>the</u> solution, the SCookies application is emblematic of a style, an attitude of approaching an issue such as digital civil rights. The Ippolita Collective has recently finished a book on Google, *The Dark Side of Google,* which you can download for free from their website.

Matthew Fuller: Search Engine Alternatives

Posted: November 14, 2009 at 12:10 am l By: chris castiglione l Tags: kartoo, Matthew Fuller, oamos, search engine alternatives, viewzi

The search market is a multi-billion dollar industry, and given such potential to capitalize there is a large window of opportunity with a vast range of possibilities for the future of search. The mythology of the search engine is that there is only one type of user and only one end-point for any given search. Matthew Fuller, author of a number of books on art, media and software, dismisses such narrow thinking by welcoming a cast of "alternative search engines" that offer some variety to the classic retrieval model of search.

In 1998 at Stanford University, Larry Page and Sergey Brin presented a paper that documented the structure of a "large-scale hypertextual web search engine" called "Google". Fuller believes that Page and Brins' paper is the backbone of all web searches and that within their methodology lies the foundation for other possibilities in the field of search. "If we understand the dynamics and conditions of what comprises a search engine, and if we think it through with a biological metaphor (as having an anatomy), then we can understand how search engines are induced to change ," said Fuller.

Fuller went on to present a handful of alternative search engines that are augmenting search:

Viewzi's Timeline View

Viewzi provides a variety of different views for searching the web. As an example, Viewzi can present data on vector space where the most relevant data appears closer to the user and the least relevant data further away. In addition, it can Viewzi can then make connections between two different search queries, or it can arrange the items on a visual timeline. Fuller added, "Viewzi sets up multiple views and multiple structures that are different than what we are used to, very different from a flat list."

Oamos's Search Results

[Oamos](#) is the search engine of saturation, entertainment and chaos. Fuller explained, "Rather than an analysis of discreet, rationally composed information, Oamos is about information as a search experience."

Kartoo's Search Results

[Kartoo](#) is a network visualization that reveals your search by mapping data within relationship similar data on the network.

There doesn't only have to be "one slot to put your data", "one button to press", and "one way to return results." What these examples show is a more multi-linear search which is different from the very flat, linear results given by Google. In conclusion Fuller affirmed, "Designing interfaces that match the potential for the Web's complexity are underdeveloped, and this will be the challenge for the next wave of search."

Teresa Numerico on Cybernetics, Search Engines and Resistance

Posted: November 13, 2009 at 11:54 pm | By: liliana bounegru | Tags: cybernetics, resistance, Search Engines, teresa numerico

Teresa Numerico is a lecturer at the University of Rome, where she teaches history and philosophy of computer science and epistemology of new media. Her presentation brought a historical and philosophy of science perspective into the themes of this conference: web search, search engines and the society of the query. She attempted to see search engines today through the lenses of cybernetics. According to her, digital technologies today intertwine the cybernetics concepts of communication and control. Just as cybernetics had to deal with communication and control, so search engines today mediate between cooperation and monopoly.

But how more precisely is the cybernetics approach embedded into search engines? According to Teresa Numerico, there are areas in which search engines have a lot in common with the cybernetic approach to machines and creating a cognitive framework, such as: search engines are black boxes in that the ranking process is not transparent, the search function offers output almost automatically to external input, and the ranking algorithm hypothesizes the self-organization within the network.

By offering a strong cognitive framework, search engines are doing the work of the archive, hence her call for an "archaeology of techno-knowledge of search." Her notion is influenced by Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*. According to Foucault, "The archive is the first law of what can be said. […] But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass […]; but they are grouped together in distinct figures composed together in accordance with specific regularities." (Foucault, 1969/1989: 145- 148).

Her main questions in relation to this direction of research into search engines were: Who controls the archive and its meanings?, as we have no control on the meaning that comes out this work; Who is defining the web society archive?, and ultimately, what is there to be done? According to Teresa Numerico, the only possible reaction is resistance. She concluded her presentation with a practical list of suggestions for potential actions of resistance which any of us can take: be creative, not communicative, in order to elude the control component of communication, as well as archiving and searching, minimize the number of online tracks that you leave, close internet devices every now and then, make efforts to vary your sources of

knowledge by consulting different search engines, and maintain a cross-media orientation in order to verify the trust and authority of one source against others.

Book Presentation: „Deep Search – The Politics of Search beyond Google"

Posted: November 13, 2009 at 10:01 pm | By: dennis deicke | Tags: Deep Search, Konrad Becker

Konrad Becker, co-founder of the World-Information Institute, used the occasion to present the book „Deep Search – The Politics of Search beyond Google". He states that it was the

editors' objective to create a book about searching which does not focus on Google because the concentration on the company from Mountain View, California restricts the view on the impact of search engines in general. Furthermore he points out another aspect that has already been stressed by other speakers at the Society of the Query conference: he prefers talking about a search society, rather than focussing on a control society.

Becker's interest is to examine the long history of the attempt to impose order on the fragile universe of information systems. He refers to library sciences as the kind of discipline that tries to analyze how to structure big amounts of information through catalogue systems. Besides Konrad Becker announces that there will be a second "Deep Search" conference organized by the World Information Institute in May 2010 which is the sequel of the first "Deep Search" conference of 2008.

The book is composed of 13 texts discussing the social and political dimensions related to the organization of knowledge through search engines. Authors involved are for example: Geert Lovink, Richard Rogers, Joris van Hoboken, Matteo Pasquinelli, Konrad Becker and Lev Manovich who also contribute to the Society of the Query conference. It is important to discuss these influence of search technology because as Becker says technology always appears to be politically neutral, but it is always connected to politcal and philosophical ideas.

Matteo Pasquinelli: Are We Renting our Collective Intelligence to Google?

Posted: November 13, 2009 at 9:14 pm | By: liliana bounegru | Tags: cognitive economy, Google, Matteo Pasquinelli, pagerank algorithm

Matteo Pasquinelli's presentation this morning at the Society of the Query was based on his paper, *Google's PageRank Algorithm: A Diagram of Cognitive Capitalism and the Rentier of the Common Intellect.* The paper can be downloaded from his website.

The essay and presentation of the Italian media theorist and critic focused on an alternative direction for research in the field of critical Internet/ Google studies. He proposed a shift of focus from Google's power and monopoly and the associated critique in Foucauldian fashion developed within fields such as surveillance studies, to the "political economy of the PageRank algorithm." According to Pasquinelli, the PageRank algorithm is the base of Google's power and an emblematic and effective diagram for cognitive capitalism.

Google's PageRank algorithm determines the value of a website according to the number of inlinks received by a webpage. The algorithm was inspired by the academic publications' citation system, in which the value of an academic publication is determined by the number of quotations received by the journal's articles. Pasquinelli takes this algorithm as a starting point in order to introduce into critical studies the notion of "network surplus-value," a notion inspired by Guatarri's notion of "machinic surplus value."

The Google PageRank diagram is the most effective diagram of the cognitive economy because it makes visible precisely this aspect characteristic of the cognitive economy, namely network value. Network value adds up to the more established notions of commodity use value and exchange value. Network value refers to the circulation value of a commodity. The pollination metaphor used by the first speaker, Yann Moulier Boutang, is useful in understanding network value. Each one of us as "click workers" contributes to the production and accumulation of network value, which is further being embedded in lucrative activities, such as Google's advertising model. While in the knowledge economy a particular emphasis is placed on intellectual property, the notion of cognitive rent to which Matteo Pasquinelli draws attention becomes useful here. Google as "rentier of the common intellect" refers to the way in which free content produced with the free labour of individuals browsing the internet is being indexed by Google and used in profit generating activities. From this perspective Pasquinelli challenges Lessing's notion of "free culture" in that Google offers a platform and certain services for free, but each one of us contributes to the Google business when performing a search, data which is being fed into the page ranking algorithm. The use of the

notion of common intellect or collective intelligence in this context is however debatable, as shown in the discussion session which followed the presentation, because there is only a certain relatively limited segment of individuals – the users which contribute content to the web – , whose linking activity is being fed into the PageRank algorithm. The prominence of the PageRank algorithm as generator of network value has also been questioned, as the algorithm is not the only ranking instrument. As the posting on Henk van Ess' website shows, human evaluators also participate in page ranking.

What is there to be done about Google's accumulation of value by means of exploitation of the common intellect? Or to use Pasquinelli's metaphor, are there alternatives to Google's parasitizing of the collective production of knowledge? How can this value be re-appropriated? As the speaker suggested, perhaps through voluntary hand made indexing of the web? Or an open page rank algorithm? Or perhaps a trust rank? This question is still open.

Joris van Hoboken: Does privacy still exist in an environment of search?

Posted: November 13, 2009 at 7:06 pm | By: chris castiglione | Tags: Google, Joris van Hoboken, privacy

"In a society of the query, it's an interesting question to ask what happens to all those queries, what legal norms apply to the registration, processing and access to these queries, and do these norms successfully safeguard the more fundamental interests of search engine users: a free realm to seek and access information and ideas," began Joris van Hoboken at The Society of The Query conference this afternoon.

Hoboken is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Information Law at the University of Amsterdam, writing his dissertation about search engines and freedom of expression. His research investigates the impact of legal norms on the users' freedom, and today at The Society of the Query he focused on the question, "Does privacy still exist in an environment of search."

Accessing Our Data From Search Engines
Hoboken rightfully admitted that most users have a lack of knowledge about data protection. Corporations behind popular search engines like Google, Yahoo and AOL are storing a plethora of user data (query logs, IP, time, cookies etc), and what most people don't know is that EU law grants users "the right to access any personal data stored about them."

For example, Article 12 (European Union Directive 95/46/EC) reads, "Member States shall guarantee every data subject the right to obtain from the controller: [...] knowledge of the logic involved in any automatic processing of data concerning him. [...] When applied specifically to search engines, users must have the right to access any personal data stored about them." Which brings Hoboken to the question: why are we so passive in enforcing these rights?

Exercising Our Rights To Our Data
In 2006 AOL purposefully released 20 million partially anonymized search queries. Hoboken reminded us of how seemingly innocuous data can be pieced together and traced back to our identifies, as was the case with AOL user #4417749 who, based on the content of her web queries, was later identified as 62-year old widow Thelma Arnold. Online you exist as a number, but data is never completely anonymized. Hoboken laments, "AOL thought it would be good for researchers, and it's a bit unfortunate that the backlash from this experiment means that it is now much harder for the public to get a hold of search data. Search data that is important for scholars to do do research."
Although there are opportunities for accessing this information, the application of law sometimes falls short. Hoboken lists three problems that we run into when attempting to access our data from search engines, "These companies are opaque, divorced from reality, and they advocate data storage with reference to repressive purposes." In his presentation he points to examples of these problems echoed in Google's retention policy and in an NPR with Google co-founder Eric Schmidt (see slides * coming soon).
"We really have to worry about the extended amount of data being stored," says Hoboken, "but fortunately there are many laws already established to protect us and our data." He challenges us to take advantage of these laws and to ask more questions. And while it may not be possible to anatomize the data being collected, the fate of online privacy lies in our understanding of these laws and in our ability to exercise the rights that will protect our data from being (ab)used.
[slideshare id=2509525&doc=jorisvanhoboken091113jvhslidessocietyofthequery-091116045911-phpapp01]

David Gugerli – "A dead body in a CSI show is a database full of traces"
Posted: November 13, 2009 at 6:51 pm ǀ By: dennis deicke ǀ Tags: David Gugerli, society of the query conference

Swiss historian of technology David Gugerli talked about the culture of the serach society during his speech at the Society of the Query. Gugerli emphasizes how searching has become a crucial part in every part of society. The author of "*Search Engines. The World as a database*" (review here) exemplifies this by mentioning the U.S. TV Show CSI, where a team of forensic investigators tries to clarify homocide cases. For Gugerli a dead body in a CSI show represents a database full of traces. The investigators search for the different traces and recombine them in order to solve the criminal case. The whole process of searching becomes the main part of the CSI story, CSI depicts the world as a database.

Using this example David Gugerli leads the hearer to his observation that data management systems have become a crucial variable shaping our real social world. The usage of database management systems has become an instrument to produce and to influence social change, by those managing databases and by those using it. To understand the major significance of database management systems it is important to be aware of the history of databases which has produced the enormous flexibility of modern database systems.

The idea of databases serving as a pool full of endless information emerged in the 1960s because of the society becoming more complex and therefore producing more complex data. Databases at this time were only able to answer foreseen questions, they were build for the purpose of providing answers for certain questions. But the emerging idea was that databases should be able to give answers to unexpected questions and to recombine information.

Gugerli describes the theoretical work which emerged during the 1970s and enabled the development of databases able to provide answers to new questions. The main question people dealt with was how to separate the process of retrieving information from the process of storing information. Until this idea came up the programmers creating and feeding the databases were also the only people being able to use them and extract information of them.

Mathematician and database theorist Edgar F. „Ted" Codd produced basic work for the development of the relational data base. His goal was to split the knowledge about how to use a data base from the knowledge about how a database is structured. To do this Codd contributed to the development of a search and query language (SEQUEL = Structured English Query Language). This language build the basis for the aim to enable access to databases to people not having knowledge about the architecture of the database and in this way took the power from the programmer.

Gugerli links this shift in database theory, which enabled a new way of asking and interpreting with ideas of critical french authors like Barthes, Derrida, Foucault. They stated that the interpretation of a text cannot be determined by the author beforehand, there is an interpretative flexibility. In Gugerli's point of view this flexibility also entered the database sciences. As a result of this shift there also emerge consequences for social reality: new organizational strucutres, new administration forms, new forms of allocation. Gugerli sees an example for these consequences in the modern 20th century enterprise using highly complex logistics, supply chain management and real time production for example. These forms are supported or even determined by database management systems.

Yann Moulier Boutang asks, "Are we all just Google's worker bees?"

Posted: November 13, 2009 at 6:31 pm | By: chris castiglione | Tags: bees, capitalism, Google, Yann Moulier Boutang | 3 Comments

Are we all just worker bees being exploited by Google for capitalistic means?

Google has become the emblem of cognitive capitalism because it has invented a new economic model relying on the controlled development of collective intelligence networks. French socio-economist Yann Moulier Boutang explored the dependency of Google (as a factory for the commodization of knowledge) on human querying (as labor).

"You are working for Google! Every second, 15 million people are clicking and feeding data to Google – a true paradigm of people working for the firm," explains Boutang. What Google is selling is not an ordinary service, but a meta-service, one that depends on human contribution. He likens this human activity to that of the worker bee, and the economy of Google is dependent on the pollination of these bees. Boutang further illustrates the analogy by looking at the habits of beekeepers, "Beekeepers in the U.S. are no longer making their living by selling wax or honey. They are selling the bee's activity: they rent their service of pollination."

Boutang surmises that Google's new economic model may be reshaping capitalism into - what he refers to as – a "meta-market". In this type of market knowledge is recognized as a public, non-rival good that can be easily transferred through the network. The marketable asset here goes beyond cognitive capitalism (where the pure input/output of an immaterial asset is commodified) by establishing a new market based on the meta-data culled form "human pollination".

In conclusion Boutang asks, "Is it possible to free the clickworker from Google?" Boutang seems uncertain, but ultimately he believes that "an imitation Google", an open-source or publicly owned knowledge engine, would be the last hope for freeing the bees from the beekeeper.

Photography by Anne Helmond. All photos from the Society of the Query Conference on Flickr.

The Conference Tag!

Posted: November 13, 2009 at 1:47 am | By: marijn de vries hoogerwerff |

Finally the moment has come, the Society of the Query conference will start this morning at 09:30! For all of you using twitter, flickr or other social media, please use the following tag (or #hashtag):

sotq

…Let our questioning this weekend flow thought the veins of the Web!

Society of the Query:
Stop Searching, Start Questioning!

Voor veel mensen is Google het startpunt wanneer ze iets gaan zoeken op het Web. Wat betekent het eigenlijk dat één zoekmachine zo'n monopoliepositie heeft? Zijn er andere manieren van zoeken? En zijn er alternatieven te bedenken voor de zoekresultaten als lange lijst, waarbij je vaak niet verder kijkt dan de eerste paar resultaten? Bestaat er zoiets als zoekmachinekunst? En wat kunnen we verwachten van semantische zoektechnologie? Deze vragen, en een hoop andere omtrent zoeken op het Web komen aan de orde tijdens Society of the Query: Stop Searching, Start Questioning!

Het Amsterdamse Instituut voor Netwerkcultuur (INC) stelt met dit event de steeds dominantere rol van de zoekmachine binnen onze cultuur kritisch aan de orde.

The urge to create logic and order in the gigantic quantity of online data has turned the search engine into our most significant point of access to the Web. In this query-driven society, it's now time to critically assess these technologies and our reliance upon them. For two days, the Society of the Query will zoom in on the essential themes surrounding Web search. What does the increasing dependency on technological aids to find valuable online content mean? Are there open source or peer-to-peer alternatives? And what can we expect from semantic search technology?

With this event, the Amsterdam-based Institute of Network Cultures (INC) addresses the growing dominance of the search engine within our culture.

Conference Themes: Society of the Query, Digital Civil Rights, Alternative Search, Art and the Engine and Googlization of Everyday Life.

Speakers: Lev Manovich (US), Matthew Fuller (UK), David Gugerli (CH), Siva Vaidhyanathan (US), Florian Cramer (NL), Christophe Bruno (FR), Joris van Hoboken (NL), Teresa Numerico (IT), Yann Moulier Boutang (FR), Matteo Pasquinelli (IT/NL), Ippolita (IT), Cees Snoek (NL), Ingmar Weber (DE), Daniel van der Velden (NL), Alessandro Ludovico (IT), Stefan Weber (DE), Antoine Isaac (NL) en Steven Pemberton (US/NL).

Date: **13-14 November 2009**
Location: **TrouwAmsterdam, Wibautstraat 127, Amsterdam**
Organization: **Institute of Network Cultures (www.networkcultures.org)**
Contact: **info@networkcultures.org, T +31(0) 20 59 51 866**
Program / Registration / Practical info: **www.networkcultures.org/query/about**

institute of network cultures   Hogeschool van Amsterdam Media, Creatie en Informatie   M s   STICHTING DEMOCRATIE EN MEDIA