



Vancouver, BC
October 26–28

Opening Session/Safiya Noble Keynote

Monday, October 26 • 9:00am - 10:30am

Session Leaders (include Twitter handles)

Safiya Noble, @safiyanoble

Bethany Nowviskie, @nowviskie

Slides (link to files, if available)

Notes

The power of algorithms (as exemplified by misrepresentation of black women in rankings in Google search)

Google search autosuggestions featured a range of sexist ideas (against women)

Autosuggest visuals appeared as censorship bars over mouths of minority women's portraits in an ad series for UN women by Mamac Ogilvy and Mather Dubai.

What does it mean to outsource all our knowledge organization/indexing/retrieval to commercial sector?

Algorithms are not neutral tools - they are written by people, they reflect the culture from which they spring. Yet we give them power to define us, as if they are *more* true, somehow, for having been "more scientific".

Algorithms represent a particular knowledge logic built on specific presumptions about what knowledge is and how one should identify its most relevant components.

Then we turn to those algorithms as if the results are TRUTH, Word of God.

Gillespie, T (2012) the relevance of Algorithms, forthcoming. In Media Technologies from MIT press.

Encourages us to see algorithms as a social construct, like any other, and to be critical of them as we should be of all social constructs.

Google search engine use grew from 47% use in 2004 to 83% in 2012. 73% feel results are accurate and trustworthy.

Commercial search engines preference commercial forces - therefore, monetary interests push certain results to the top. Money, quite literally, talks, or at least directs the cultural voice.

Technology is a social construction, embedded with social and political values.

<http://culturedigitally.org/2012/11/the-relevance-of-algorithms/>

<http://innovate.ucsb.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Winner-Do-Artifacts-Have-Politics-1980.pdf>

Prominence for a fee -- to popular, wealthy and powerful sites. Via technical mechanisms of crawling, indexing, and ranking algorithms, as well as through human-mediated trading of prominence for a fee at the expense of others.

Nissenbaum, H and Introna L (2000) Shaping the web: Why the politics of search engines matters. The Information Society 3(16), 169-185

Google is a significant threat to democracy: therefore it must be regulated. Tim Worstall.

Forbes, 4/2/2013:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2013/04/02/google-is-a-significant-threat-to-democracy-therefore-it-must-be-regulated/>

How is it that feminist viewpoints have been divorced from search results about women?

Screen size matters - the size of display constrains the first page of results, making top rankings even more valuable.

anyone get the citation for Google search results impacting outcome of political races??

This?

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2013/04/02/google-is-a-significant-threat-to-democracy-therefore-it-must-be-regulated/>

yes, thanks!! De nada.