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Reflection on *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)*

A book called *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)* by Siva Vaidhyanathan provides little known details about Google and its products (including Gmail, Google Chrome, Android, Youtube, etc.). The very first question the author asks the readers is why we all should trust Google without questioning what we might gain and, at the same time, lose by using its products every day.

Many people think of Google as a great mediator between them and the Internet. It is so easy to find what one wants just by searching it through the use of Google. Google is intuitive in that it seems to understand what the researcher needs to find, quickly displaying the results. However, Vaidhyanathan implores us to disregard what we view of the first page of results, but rather, to focus on what we don't see, and why the results are in that specific order. He argues that the real power of Google is showing us what the developers of Google want us to see.

There are customers who trust their results implicitly. Most often, they either ignore or do not realize that the results they have gotten are influenced in large part by advertising dollars. These customers continue to use additional Google products to mediate their experience on the Internet. They have limited consideration of how the information shared through transactions with Google might influence search results. Interlinked software (e.g., Gmail, Google Calendar, Chrome, etc.) and questionable privacy policies allow Google to better determine exactly what we would like to see in our result while filtering out the competition. The more we use Google, the better our results appear, increasing our trust in Google (Salin).

Throughout *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)*, Vaidhyanathan clearly demonstrates just how much power Google has over the dissemination of the world's information. Google has the power to shape perceptions, to promote or deter reactions to political events, and to limit

access to certain kinds of information. Vaidhyanathan provides a well-researched and easily understood discussion of how Google has gained in power and prestige and how it maintains this level of influence. Still, the real power of the book lies in the author's ability to question beliefs about an organization that, for many, garners an almost religious reverence. The purpose of this book is not to encourage us to abandon Google or Google products, something that even Vaidhyanathan acknowledges would negatively affect our experience of the Internet, but instead, to ask the question "Is this the best we can do" (p. 201). Is it appropriate to have an entity that is fueled by the consumption of information, not the discovery of knowledge, be the world's filter, disseminator, and organizer of information? For Vaidhyanathan, the answer is most certainly, no. Instead, he ends by arguing for the creation of the Human Knowledge Project, which would bring together librarians and knowledge workers around the world to take up the mission of "organizing the world's information and making it accessible" (p. 205), thus taking the task out of the hands of companies and putting it into the hands of public institutions. However, for this reviewer, the question of whether or not an entity like the Human Knowledge Project, or any project with such a broad mission, has the potential to become just another Google remains (Sarin).

Works Cited

Salin, Lindsay C. Reviewed work(s): *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)*. By Siva Vaidhyanathan. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. Pp. xiv+265. \$26.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-520-25882-2.