Introduction: Living with Google

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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