

Google blocked every one of the WSWS's 45 top search terms

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4 August 2017

An intensive review of Internet data has established that Google has severed links between the World Socialist Web Site and the 45 most popular search terms that previously directed readers to the WSWS. The physical censorship implemented by Google is so extensive that of the top 150 search terms that, as late as April 2017, connected the WSWS with readers, 145 no longer do so.

These findings make clear that the decline in Google search traffic to the WSWS is not the result of some technical issue, but a deliberate policy of censorship. The fall took place in the three months since Google announced on April 25 plans to promote “authoritative web sites” above those containing “offensive” content and “conspiracy theories.”

Because of these measures, the WSWS's search traffic from Google has fallen by two-thirds since April.

The WSWS has analyzed tens of thousands of search terms, and identified those key phrases and words that had been most likely to place the WSWS on the first or second page of search results. The top 45 search terms previously included “socialism,” “Russian revolution,” “Flint Michigan,” “proletariat,” and “UAW [United Auto Workers].” The top 150 results included the terms “UAW contract,” “rendition” and “Bolshevik revolution.” All of these terms are now blocked.

In a set of guidelines issued to Google evaluators in March, elaborated in April by Google VP of Engineering Ben Gomes, the company instructed its search evaluators to flag pages returning “conspiracy theories” or “upsetting” content unless “the query clearly indicates the user is seeking an alternative viewpoint.” The changes to the search rankings of WSWS content are consistent with such a mechanism.

Users of Google will be able to find the WSWS if

they specifically include “World Socialist Web Site” in their search request. But if their inquiry simply includes term such as “Trotsky,” “Trotskyism,” “Marxism,” “socialism” or “inequality,” they will not find the site.

More than 90 percent of Google search users do not click on results past the first page, and over 99 percent do not click on links past the 10th page. This means that if a result is demoted beyond the first 100 results, it is effectively unreachable.

The new figures are based on a detailed analysis of the WSWS's top 30,000 search terms, compiled by the SEMRush search optimization software and checked against Google's own data as well as Google searches.

Despite repeated attempts to contact Google's press office, the company continues to refuse to comment on the facts revealed by the WSWS's investigation.

But the WSWS's coverage, which has been widely shared and referenced by other independent news outlets, has brought substantial attention to the role of Google's so-called evaluators.

In a live webcast Wednesday, John Mueller, a webmaster trends analyst at Google, was asked whether these evaluators could affect “web site reputation.” Mueller gave what could only be called a non-denial denial, declaring that the actions of evaluators “could theoretically include something like reputation of a web site in general.”

This was effectively an admission that Google's army of censors has the capability to blackball individual sites by demoting their “reputation.”

The list of search terms blocked by Google indicate what the government and corporate oligarchy do not want the population to know about.

Terms relating directly to socialism are those that are most heavily manipulated. The terms “socialism vs. capitalism,” “socialist healthcare,” “social class

struggle,” and “socialist party manifesto,” which all returned WSWS articles on the first page in the past, now do not return the WSWS in the top 100 results. The terms “socialism,” “socialist,” “socialist movement” and “class conflict,” in which the WSWS previously appeared within the first four pages, all no longer return WSWS articles.

In 2014, the International Committee of the Fourth International vowed to put the struggle against war at the center of its political program, pledging to rebuild an anti-war movement based on the working class. Notably, the terms, “anti-war literature,” “articles against war” and “war socialism,” which used to have WSWS articles within the first page of search results, likewise no longer return WSWS articles at all.

The WSWS has been blacklisted in searches dealing with history, and in particular historical topics related to the revolutionary struggles of the 20th century. These include the terms “Russian revolution,” “Bolshevik revolution” and “October revolution,” all of which returned results in the top 50 in April.

Workers all over the world follow the coverage of the WSWS for its exposure of the anti-working class trade unions. Perhaps for this reason, the WSWS has been removed from the top 100 results for the term “UAW,” the abbreviation of the United Auto Workers. Over 125 search terms, including the word “strike,” have also had the WSWS removed from the top 100 results.

A major element of the WSWS’s coverage relates to social issues, particularly social inequality, which the WSWS identified as a major trend in the US and internationally as early as 1998. Notably, the terms “social inequality in the world,” “poverty and social inequality” and “global inequality articles,” which previously returned results in the top five, now return no results in the top 100. The term “Flint Michigan,” which brought the second-highest amount of traffic to the WSWS of any keyword, likewise had all WSWS articles removed from the first 100 entries.

Finally, there is the expansion of war. Of the 30,000 search terms in which the WSWS appeared in the top 100 results in April, over 1,100 referenced the term “war.” Of those, more than half, or 761, were removed from the first 10 pages of results.

In April, the following search terms would result in an article from the WSWS among the first five entries: “nuclear war with China (1), “is the US going to war

with Iran (1),” “China US war scenario, (3),” and “what would happen if a nuclear war happened (5).” All of these terms have been blocked.

Other notable terms in the top 10 included “will Russia start a nuclear war (6),” “war against Russia (8)” and “threat of nuclear war (9),” all of which have been blocked from the first 100 results.

Google argues that it is seeking to implement changes to its search engine in order to “improve” the experience for users. But it is obvious that users who are searching for the word “socialism” or “socialist,” and “Russian revolution” are looking for socialist web sites and a socialist perspective!

Google’s argument that it is flagging content that is “not what people are looking for” is an absurd and cynical fraud. WSWS articles are directly relevant to every single search term referenced in this article.

Google is blocking content from the WSWS precisely because it is “what people are looking for,” and what Google, working with the highest levels of the state intelligence apparatus, does not want them to find.

The WSWS needs your help fighting Google’s censorship. The figures presented in this article alone have required dozens of hours to compile and required the commitment of substantial financial resources. But we need to do more. Please donate today!



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact