Evidence of Google blacklisting of left and progressive sites continues to mount

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8 August 2017

A growing number of leading left-wing websites have confirmed that their search traffic from Google has plunged in recent months, adding to evidence that Google, under the cover of a fraudulent campaign against fake news, is implementing a program of systematic and widespread censorship.

Truthout, a not-for-profit news website that focuses on political, social, and ecological developments from a left progressive standpoint, had its readership plunge by 35 percent since April. The Real News , a nonprofit video news and documentary service, has had its search traffic fall by 37 percent. Another site, Common Dreams , last week told the WSWS that its search traffic had fallen by up to 50 percent.

As extreme as these sudden drops in search traffic are, they do not equal the nearly 70 percent drop in traffic from Google seen by the WSWS.

"This is political censorship of the worst sort; it's just an excuse to suppress political viewpoints," said Robert Epstein, a former editor in chief of *Psychology Today* and noted expert on Google.

Epstein said that at this point, the question was whether the WSWS had been flagged specifically by human evaluators employed by the search giant, or whether those evaluators had influenced the Google Search engine to demote left-wing sites. "What you don't know is whether this was the human evaluators who are demoting you, or whether it was the new algorithm they are training," Epstein said.

Richard Stallman, the world-renowned technology pioneer and a leader of the free software movement, said he had read the WSWS's coverage on Google's censorship of left-wing sites. He warned about the immense control exercised by Google over the Internet, saying, "For people's main way of finding articles about a topic to be run by a giant corporation creates an obvious potential for abuse."

According to data from the search optimization tool SEMRush, search traffic to Mr. Stallman's personal website, Stallman.org, fell by 24 percent, while traffic to gnu.org, operated by the Free Software Foundation, fell 19 percent.

Eric Maas, a search engine optimization consultant working in the San Francisco Bay area, said his team has surveyed a wide range of alternative news sites affected by changes in Google's algorithms since April. "While the update may be targeting specific site functions, there is evidence that this update is promoting only large mainstream news organizations. What I find problematic with this is that it appears that some sites have been targeted and others have not."

The massive drop in search traffic to the WSWS and other left-wing sites followed the implementation of changes in Google's search evaluation protocols. In a statement issued on April 25, Ben Gomes, the company's vice president for engineering, stated that Google's update of its search engine would block access to "offensive" sites, while working to surface more "authoritative content."

In a set of guidelines issued to Google evaluators in March, 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 WSWS will continue to expose and fight Google's program of political censorship, but we need the help of our readers. Please share this article by email and social media, donate to the WSWS, and sign up for email updates .

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