The nationality of issues
Repurposing Google for Internet Research

DMI Summer School

Session 3

Facilitated by Esther Weltevrede

1. The nationality of issues
2. Google and location
3. DMI Google tools
4. Projects
5. The wiki

Studying the attention of national issues

- Teun van Dijk (1988)

Method for analyzing the international coverage of national news in the press

- Noortje Marres & Richard Rogers (2008)

Method for analyzing where an issue is happening and where it is discussed on the web

Question of the week: How can Google be repurposed for researching the nationality of issues on the web?

Structures of international news

News: discourse analysis

Case study: How the assassination of president-elect Bechir Gemayel of Lebanon (1982) is covered in the international press

- Coverage, frequency, relevance
- Headlines, type of article, section
- Thematic structure (actors, event, context, history, cause/effect)
- Topic clusters

Findings:

First world press more background topics, third world more about (international) reactions

Western press privileges western-related topics and actors

Subsuming the ground

Web: hyperlink analysis

Case study: How local realities of the Ferghana Valley, the Narmada Dams, and the BTC pipeline are put to use on the Web

Issue Crawler counts and weights hyperlinks

Actors and the articulation of issues derived from sites

Findings:

Issues are not articulated in more detail locally: “it cannot be maintained unconditionally that the closer one gets to the ground, the more one knows about what is going on there” (2008: 7)

Local realities tend to be presented as part of global controversies: “Local issues are mobilized, on the Web, to make global points” (2008:21)

Google and Internet research

Google repurposes news and hyperlinks in their search algorithms. Google creates ‘spheres’

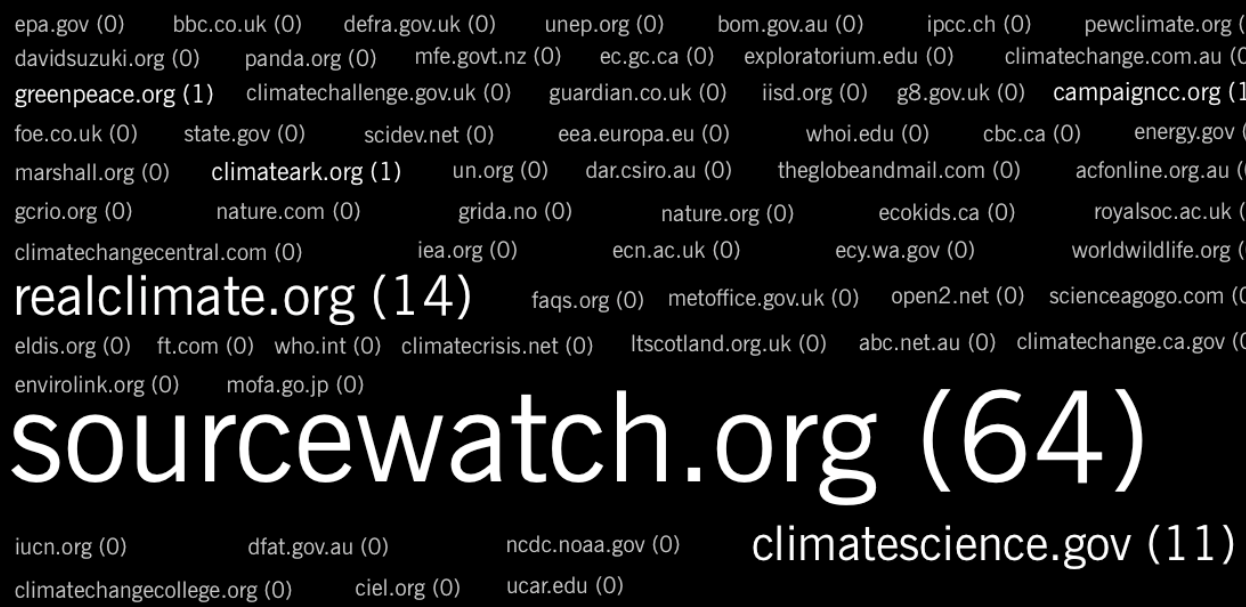
- News sphere (news.google.com)
- web sphere (google.com)
- blogosphere (blogsearch.google.com)

Not the habermasian ‘public sphere,’ but an engine demarcated source set, presented as ranked result pages

Previous DMI research: ‘source distance’ and ‘cross-spherical analysis’

Climate Change Sceptics on the Web (S. Fred Singer)

Research Question_To what extent are climate change 'skeptics' present in the climate change spaces on the Web?
Findings_There is distance between the skeptics and the top of the search engine returns.



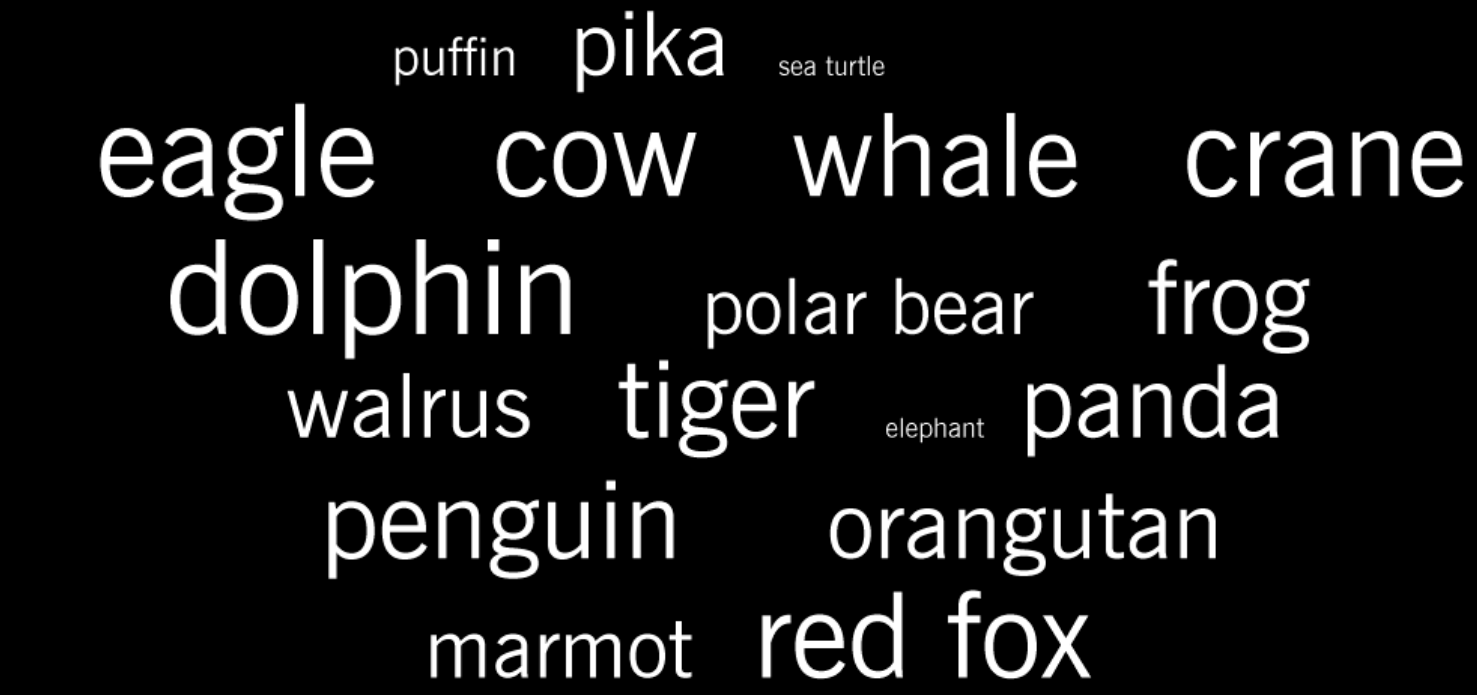
Source_google.com
Query_"Fred Singer"
Method_Search for query "Fred Singer" in top 100. Organized in order.
Tools_Google Scraper and Tag Cloud Generator
Date_30 July 2007

Product_of the Digital Methods Initiative, dmi.mediastudies.nl. **Analysis**_by Bram Nijhof, Richard Rogers and Laura van der Vlies. **Design**_Anne Helmond.

CLIMATE CHANGE SCEPTICS

Issue Animals Hierarchy on the Web (Google)

Research Question_For the issue of climate change, how prominent is each animal (in text and image)? Are there significant differences per 'sphere' (web, news, blogosphere) in the frequency with which each animal is referenced?
Findings_On the web, for a text query, results are distributed across all the animals not particularly favoring one issue animal.



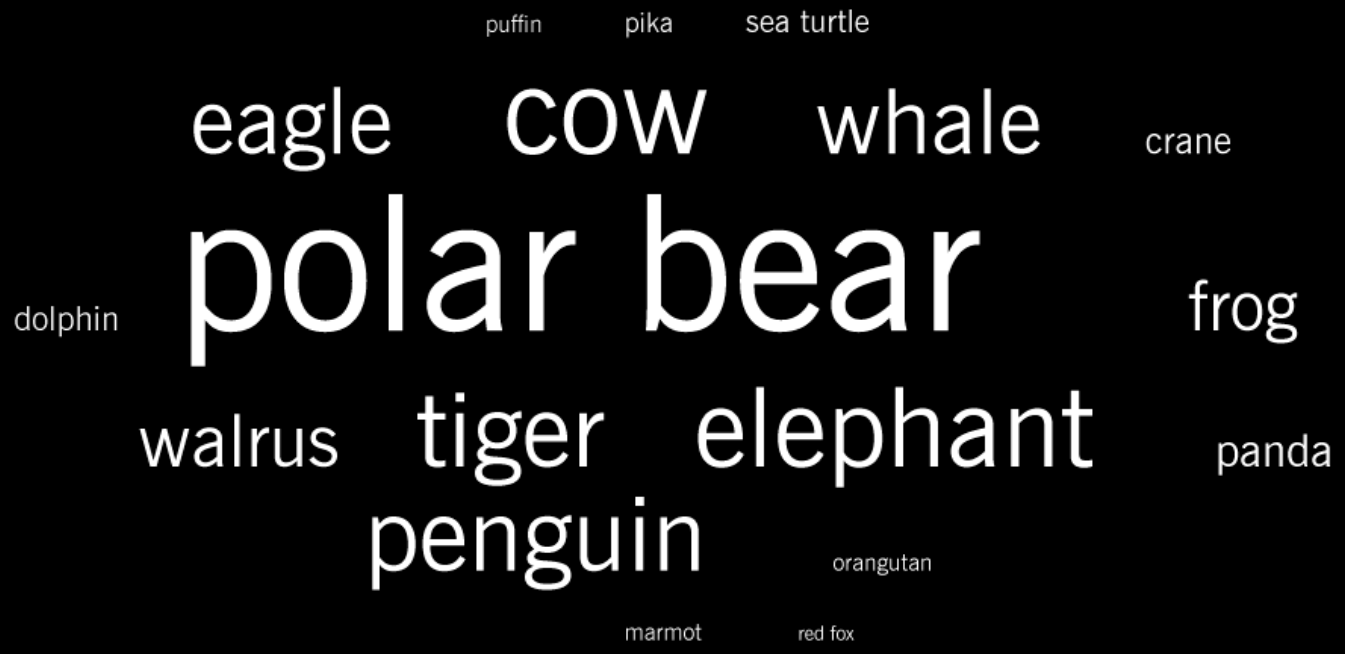
Source_www.google.com
Query_"climate change" + scrape top 100 results for "*animal x*"
Tools_Google Scraper, Compare Lists and Tag Cloud Generator
Date_15 July 2007

Product_of the Digital Methods Initiative, dmi.mediastudies.nl. **Analysis**_by Esther Weltevrede and Sabine Niederer. **Design**_by Esther Weltevrede, Sabine Niederer and Anne Helmond.

ISSUE ANIMALS

Issue Animals Hierarchy in the News (Google News)

Research Question_For the issue of climate change, how prominent is each animal (in text and image)? Are there significant differences per 'sphere' (web, news, blogosphere) in the frequency with which each animal is referenced?
Findings_In the news, for a text query, the polar bear is the animal most associated with climate change, followed by the cow.



Source_news.google.com
Query_"climate change" + *"animal x"*
Tools_Google News Scraper and Tag Cloud Generator
Date_15 July 2007

Product_of the Digital Methods Initiative, dmi.mediastudies.nl. **Analysis**_by Esther Weltevrede and Sabine Niederer. **Design**_by Esther Weltevrede, Sabine Niederer and Anne Helmond.

ISSUE ANIMALS

Issue Animals Hierarchy in the Blogosphere

Research Question_For the issue of climate change, how prominent is each animal (in text and image)? Are there significant differences per 'sphere' (web, news, blogosphere) in the frequency with which each animal is referenced?
Findings_In the blogosphere, for a text query, the polar bear is the animal most associated with climate change, followed by the cow.

Source_search.technorati.com
Query_"climate change" + "*animal x*"
Authority_a little
Tools_Technorati Scraper and Tag Cloud Generator
Date_17 July 2007

Product_of the Digital Methods Initiative, dmi.mediastudies.nl. **Analysis**_by Esther Weltevrede and Sabine Niederer. **Design**_by Esther Weltevrede, Sabine Niederer and Anne Helmond.

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Google for national web studies

Most Google engines have a national version

http://www.google.com/
http://news.google.com/
http://blogsearch.google.com/ (the exception)

Visit Google's Site in Your Local Domain

www.google.ad Andorra
www.google.ae الامارات العربية المتحدة
www.google.com.af افغانستان
www.google.com.ag Antigua and Barbuda
www.google.com.ai Anguilla
www.google.am Հայաստան
www.google.it.ao Angola
www.google.com.ar Argentina
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www.google.cl Chile
www.google.cn 中国
www.google.com.co Colombia
www.google.co.cr Costa Rica
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www.google.co.za South Africa
www.google.co.zm Zambia
www.google.co.zw Zimbabwe

Things to take into account using Google for national web studies

- Digital divide
- Market share
- Language
- Availability in Google

Digital Divide Cartogram

Country size is proportional to level of **Internet usage**.

Data source: internetworldstats.com

Product of the Information Technology and International Cooperation Program.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands. April **05**

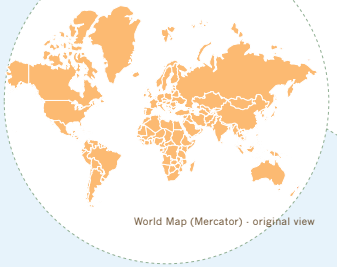
Analysis_Koen Martens, sonologic.nl.
Design_Marieke van Dijk, anderemedia.nl.

SSRC

Digital Divide Cartogram

Country size is inversely proportional to level of **Internet usage.**

Data source: internetworldstats.com



Product of the Information Technology and International Cooperation Program.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands. April **05**

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National market share

"Google matters most in Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In each of these nation states Google controls more than 95 percent of the Web search market."

"Closely behind these leaders are Venezuela, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, Columbia, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and the United Kingdom, all of which give Google between 90 and 95 percent of their Web search traffic.",

"Google is far behind the local competition in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Russia. Each of these nation-states grants Google less than 40 percent of the search market."

- Siva Vaidhyanathan, June 30, 2009

Also check: http://alexa.com/topsites/countries

Language

http://www.google.com/language_tools

Some other interesting Google tools

http://www.google.com/trends

http://www.google.com/insights/search/#

https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

Availability in Google

http://www.google.com/support/insights//bin/answer.py?answer=99452

Project proposals

1. Cross-national issue analysis (compare source-distance, cross-spherical analysis)

– how local or global is an issue?

2. Search engine monitoring (compare Personalized search)

– How far along is customization on location? What is the difference in results between Google's different national webs (e.g. advanced region vs google.nl)

3. Customization on location versus Internet censorship

– How to turn Google into a tool for Internet censorship research?

4. Topology of issues per national web

– how can Google be used to tell which issues are prominent in a national web space?

After coffee

- Generatenational.net
- Project groups
- The Wiki

The national web according to Google

Generatenational.net

1. Cross-national issue analysis

– how local or global is an issue?

Choice of issue:

- national issue across national webs: an exercise in studying where is an issue happening and where is it discussed (e.g. iran election)
- international issue in national web spaces: an exercise in studying the attention an issue receives nationally, and how (e.g. climate change/global warming/global cooling)
- studying a controversy across national webs?

2. Search engine monitoring

- how far along is customization? how much influence does customization have on results?

- Compare to language results or personalization? Use proxies?

Background reading: http://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/PersonalizedSearch

Customization on location versus Internet censorship

- how does customization on location relate to censorship?
- how do top results for a query compare to what people actually search for in a country?

Trends data is based on 'successful queries,' which could be used as indicator for censorship

http://trends.google.com/websites?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.humum.net%2F&geo=all&date=all

Background reading:

http://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/DmiSummer09#Recommended_Readings

Topology of national issues per national web (over time?)

- Comparing the prominence and relevance of issues across national webs
- Does the local web privilege international or national issues?

User studies: - what do people search for in a national web?

Generatenational: - what issues are prominent in the top results of a national web?

The wiki

http://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ThingsInternetResearchersShouldKnowAboutGoogle