


Report: Google Runs Political Blacklists

 Google blames users for "behaving badly" leading to censorship

Joe Raedle/Getty Images

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A new report claims that Google runs two blacklists, designed to remove “fringe domains” and op-eds from featured snippets at the top of Google search results. Sites included on the blacklist include Breitbart News and the American Spectator.

The Daily Caller [reports](#) that two blacklists have been discovered as part of Google’s web answers feature. One is called “webanswers_url_blacklist,” and it impacts Google’s “featured snippets” or answer blocks. These answer blocks usually provide a quick block of content to the top of a Google search for a simple question.

The Caller claims that internal screenshots show instructions at the top of the page of the blacklist which reads: “To ensure the blacklist will REMOVE a URL, add a line ‘# REMOVE url’.” And, “To ensure the blacklist WON’T remove a URL by accident, add ‘# PERMIT url’.” This would appear to imply that these blacklists are manually edited by employees.

The Caller notes that a *Washington Post* [op-ed](#) titled: “How Vladimir Putin Became The World’s Favorite Dictator,” was included in the blacklist. The op-ed was returned by the algorithm in response to a user searching: “who is the dictator of Russia.” A note from a Google employee in the changelog shows that the company may remove all opinion pieces from web answers. “We are going to be removing opinion docs from all of

newsey/political/sensitive webanswers. So, BLing any document that we consider to be clearly opinion is not an issue," the employee note says.

A Google spokesperson told the Caller: "Featured snippets are a feature within Search that highlights web sources that are likely to contain what you're looking for. Due to the special formatting they receive, we have policies that prevent us from showing a featured snippet for topics like civics or medical information where the content lacks broad consensus. Our systems are designed to not show featured snippets that would violate our policies, and we take action if violating snippets still appear. These policies and actions have no impact on how a page ranks in organic search listings."

The second web answers blacklist, called `all_fringe_domains`, appears to be generated by an algorithm according to the Caller. Amongst the websites listed under the fringe domains section are Breitbart News, American Spectator, Breaking911, the website of pastor Brian Jones, the website of [Bring Your Bible to School Day](#), Consortium News, St. Philip the Deacon Lutheran Church, SpeakerRyan.com, The Franklin Society, Free Thought Project, The Gateway Pundit, and The Gorka Briefing.

Multiple websites critical of conservatives are also listed, including Breitbart Unmasked and Spencer Watch, a blog critical of Jihad Watch's Robert Spencer. Breitbart News [recently reported](#) that other Google search results had linked President Trump and his daughter Ivanka to the web answers section for the term "hebephilia."

Breitbart News reporter Allum Bokhari writes:

Until Breitbart News made its inquiry earlier this afternoon, searches for the term “hebephilia” displayed [a picture of a young Ivanka Trump sitting on her father’s knee during an event](#). The image appeared in Google’s “snippet,” the featured result that appears above search and is aimed at answering a searcher’s question right away.

It also appears as the first result in Google’s Image Search for the same term.

After Breitbart News brought the search result to Google’s attention, the tech giant said it would remove the image from its snippet.

“Featured snippets are generated automatically to help people easily find pages that our systems determine may have the most relevant information,” said a Google spokeswoman. “In this case, the snippet included an image from another source, which was nonrepresentative of the topic. We are removing the image from this snippet in accordance with our policies for this feature.”

Google has policies that correct inaccurate snippets. However, the company does not have similar policies for organic search results (the ten blue links that appear on each page of search results) or Google Image Search, and the picture of the President and his daughter still appears at the top of Google Image searches for hebephilia.

Read the [full article here](#).