DEFINE “NEUTRAL”

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Three mantras

- Search is subjective
- Promoting Peter means demoting Paul
- It’s the users, stupid
THEORIES OF NEUTRALITY
Equality

Scott Cleland: “Second, Google’s ultra-secret search algorithm [sic] reportedly has over 1,000 variables/discrimination biases which decide which content gets surfaced, so it can be found and monetized, and which content gets effectively hidden ‘at the back of the arena.’”

This is nonsense; the point of search is to make distinctions

* Promoting Peter means demoting Paul
Foundem: “Throughout Foundem’s three and a half year penalty, Foundem continued to rank normally in Yahoo and Bing.”

What is the objectively correct #1 result for “apple”?

* Search is subjective
Bias

- AT&T: “Google’s algorithms unquestionably do favor some companies or sites.”
- Who decides which biases matter?
- Search is subjective
Traffic

* StudioBriefing: “We are in no position to battle Google on this. And without Studio Briefing being included in Google search results we cannot draw sufficient readers to remain viable.”

* If the bus stop moves, the corner deli has no right to complain

* It’s the users, stupid

* Promoting Peter means demoting Paul
Relevance

- Foundem: “the principle that search engines should have no editorial policies other than that their results be comprehensive, impartial and based solely on relevance”
- It’s easy to tell relevance-enhancing stories
- It’s the users, stupid
Self-Interest

* Consumer Watchdog: “Google now inserts results from Google Maps into the first page of results from most Google searches, driving enormous traffic toward Google Maps and away from competitors.”

* They say this like it’s a bad thing

* It’s the users, stupid
Transparency

* Foundem: “Search Neutrality can be defined as the principle that search engines should be open and transparent about their editorial policies ...”


* It’s the users, stupid
Manipulation

* Foundem: “By introducing special treatment for particular site names manually fed to the algorithm (such as ‘whitelists’), objectivity is lost, and the opinion becomes undeniably subjective.”

* Google makes targeted changes, so nu?

* Promoting Peter means demoting Paul

* Search is subjective

* It’s the users, stupid
CONVERSATION