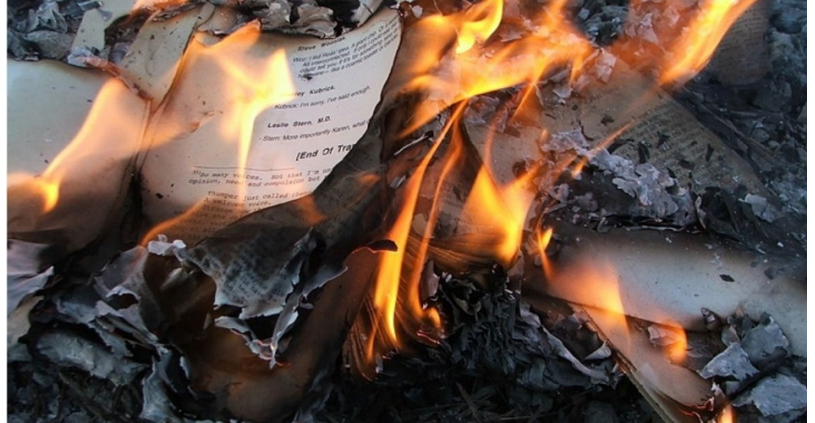




Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 16, 2015

Google's New Algorithm: Modern Version of Old-fashioned Censorship?

The Internet search giant, Google, will soon begin ranking websites based on their trustworthiness rather than popularity. Google's new formula for returning search results will automatically weed out fact from fiction in an effort to improve accuracy. According to Hal Hodson writing for [NewScientist](#), web pages are now given scores based on the number of other sites that link to them, with the obvious downside that, given enough links, "websites full of misinformation can rise up in the rankings."



The truth algorithm that Google researchers are developing will compare websites to a vast store of information the corporation has been compiling over the years. Known as Knowledge Vault, it is an automated and super-charged version of Google's manually compiled fact database called Knowledge Graph. Google researcher Xin Luna Dong explained how his team developed the new "Knowledge-Based Trust ([KBT](#))" scoring system: "A source that has few false facts is considered to be trustworthy."

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Hodson also wrote about the cutting-edge Knowledge Vault in [NewScientist](#) last August, when he styled it "the largest store of knowledge in human history" and crowed, "It promises to let Google answer questions like an oracle rather than a search engine, and even to turn a new lens on human history."

That eerily disconcerting statement becomes ominous when you consider that Google has already implemented its new truth algorithm for [medical searches](#), with disturbing consequences. Truth-according-to-Google means that [anti-vaccination](#) websites no longer make the cut, despite the fact that recently released federal statistics reveal the risk to children's health posed by vaccines is overwhelmingly greater than that posed by the diseases these medications are formulated to combat.

This single example tips Google's hand. "Facts" contained in the Knowledge Vault are still based on truth-by-consensus, only now they are also siphoned through a political correctness filter. Some [media outlets](#) are now comparing Google to an updated version of George Orwell's Ministry of Truth in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The Ministry of Truth is a government propaganda agency charged with the task of conforming public opinion to fit the ruling party line.

Many worry that Google's censorship promises to suppress First Amendment rights and discourage the scientific method, which depends on skepticism and encourages investigators to challenge preconceived notions. "It could make it more difficult for bright young people to bring about the next revolution in science," University of Maryland professor Jim Purtilo told [FoxNews.com](#). "After all, most of today's established science came about because someone challenged the herd mentality of yesterday," he opined.

Meteorologist Anthony Watts told [FoxNews.com](#), "I worry about this issue greatly.... My site gets a significant portion of its daily traffic from Google." His blog, [Watts Up With That](#), is a popular source



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that questions the validity of global-warming claims. Watts made waves in the climate-change world in 2009 when he published [extensive research](#) about the U.S. surface temperature record. Watts revealed a high percentage of stations in violation of the National Weather Service's siting requirements that recording devices not be placed near sources of artificial or radiated/reflected heat such as exhaust fans, asphalt or concrete surfaces, or rooftops. These violations contributed to the federal government reporting a 1.4 degree Fahrenheit increase in U.S. temperatures since 1895. Moreover, in 2011, the U.S. Government Accountability Office confirmed Watts' findings and called on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) to revamp its U.S. Historical Climatology Network. Is this fact included in Google's Knowledge Vault? That's impossible to know for certain. But since Watts is named on Wikipedia's list of "[Climate change skeptics](#)," it's reasonable for him to worry he'll earn a low KBT score.

Rich Noyes of the Media Research Center also complained to FoxNews.com that many fact-checking sources are infected with political bias. "They're very good at debunking myths if they upset liberals, but if it's a liberal or left-wing falsehood, the fact-checkers don't seem as excited about debunking it," he said, offering an example of the watchdog website Politifact. According to analysts at [George Mason University](#), Politifact rates "Republicans less trustworthy than Democrats" despite "controversies over Obama administration statements regarding Benghazi, the IRS and the Associated Press." For example, Politifact named the 2010 "[Lie of the Year](#)" to be the contention that ObamaCare represents a government takeover of healthcare. Yet it's logical to assume, since Politifact boasts a Pulitzer Prize, it also merits a high Google KBT score.

Regardless of the Knowledge Vault controversy, Google far outstrips other search engines in popularity. Users conduct between 60 and 70 percent of their [online searches](#) on Google. But even should they opt for another provider, little is likely to change. Hodson quoted a spokesman from Boston's technology research firm Gartner, who said the competition is busy constructing databases similar to Knowledge Vault. "Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Amazon and IBM are all building them," said technology analyst Tom Austin.



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