

QUAERO MODERATION

FLORIAN CRAMER

WELCOME

Why talk about search engines in an art school and not an engineering school? The title of this conference is indication enough of politics: the French and German search engine projects reflect that information search has become a cultural, political, economic if not geopolitical issue - who owns the keys and the access interface to information and knowledge?

It would be easy to boil down the issue to a European-American industrial “me, too” issue: Quaero as Europe’s answer to Google just like the Ariane is Europe’s answer to the Space Shuttle, or Airbus vs. Boeing. It’s also rather easy to dismiss the European search engine efforts as just another predictable failure and black hole of EU subsidies like the Ariane.

But the issue is more than just industrial politics: Jean-Noel Jeanneney, president of the Bibliotheque Nationale: issue of cultural politics, cultural dominance of Google; “When Google Challenges Europe”, departing from the Google Books program.

Historically new that access to information, and how it is designed, is culturally as much an issue as the information itself: Umberto Eco’s fiction of medieval monastrey which hides Aristotle’s treatise on the comedy. Science and knowledge reforms are closely linked to information access reforms, universities, libraries, printing presses since the reformation and enlightenment.

Development in search engines: In the beginning, from Lycos to Hotbot to Altavista, just about the size of the search index. Revolution through Google, and now contested by Quaero: How the results are sorted and ranked, in other words: how they are presented to the user.

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Less abstract example, taken from a work of one of my students: Google search in Europe, China, misspelling. And we're only scratching the surface of it.

MICHAEL ZIMMER

Michael Zimmer is the Microsoft Resident Fellow at the Information Society Project at Yale Law School for 2007-2008.

Media studies scholar,

PhD on Quest for the Perfect Search Engine - pun on Umberto Eco as well (Search for the Perfect Language)

social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of new media and information technologies: privacy, autonomy, and liberty.

“Privacy and Quaero’s Quest for the Perfect Search Engine: Threats and Opportunities”

Quaero’s ideal of the perfect search engine vs. Google’s ideal, privacy issues in the Quaero search engine concept

FLORIAN SCHNEIDER

filmmaker (features on migration and new global movements for Arte), political and media activist, initiator of “No human is illegal” and the affiliated web site kein.org which now also hosts the Nettime mailing list, organizer of festivals related to media activism, publisher of art/theory/activism magazine Makeworlds.

METAHAVEN

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Design research group, affiliated to Jan van Eyck, members: Vinca Kruk, Adriaan Mellegers, Tina Clausmeyer, Daniel van der Velden.

topics: identity, politics, history, aesthetics, resistance, cryptography, branding, iconography, heraldry, disappearance, empire, conspiracy theories, sovereignty, independence, discourse.

TSILA HASSINE

Originally from Tel Aviv, obtained a degree in mathematics and computer science and a Media Design M.A. from Piet Zwart, now post-graduate researcher at Jan van Eyck.

Has worked with search engine manipulations and politics already as a student, collaboration with De Geuzen on global anxiety monitor.

INGMAR WEBER

Studied Mathematician, works at the Max Planck Institute for Computer Science in Saarbruecken, Germany, Ph.D. project on Algorithms and Complexity Group, will build a search engine in 15 minutes here on the panel, followed by a critical survey of existing web search engines

RESPONDENTS

Isabelle Stengers. Prof., philosopher, but graduated in chemistry – and one of the few outstanding philosophers with a natural science background [not mathematics or physics] , like Jean Piaget, Humberto Maturana, and her co-author Ilya Prigogine – philosopher of science both in the sense of a historical philosophy of science and philosophy built on scientific insight: systems and chaos theory – political and ethical questions are central to her work, critical investigator of philosophical and political concepts.

Maurits de Bruijn. Graphic designer, specializing on dynamic media - among others, designer of Jeanne van Heeswijk's and Metahaven's web site, learned to program because of that.

teaches at Arnhem Academy of Art and Design

Sabine Niederer. Art historian, design theorist, producer and curator of new media / arts / digital culture events, managing director of the Institute of Network Cultures in Amsterdam, teaches Critical Design at the School of Interactive Media in Amsterdam

Andre Nusselder. Ph.D. on human-computer interface as a medium of imagination, now researches how new media technologies construct images of the past