

By Katelyn Li:

Peer Review

### Summary

Google is a global powerhouse with functions that extend from its most popular use as a search engine to voice recognition and traffic monitoring. However, the use of its full capacities comes at a cost: the loss of privacy, among other consequences that the essay brings up and calls to the reader's attention.

### Major Points

- “Google is perhaps the third most ubiquitous word around the world. The first is OK, the second Coca Cola.” I like the opening lines; they really hook you into the introduction.
- You do a good job of explaining the way Google's voice recognition service works to the layman reader, but still keep your audience in mind when using technical terms.
  - ESSIDs
  - Zipf's Law
  - PageRank—I get the idea of how it works, but what is it exactly?
  - SEO—who benefits/profits from it? Has anyone actually made any breakthroughs regarding the manipulation of PageRank's algorithm?
- Your style of writing is technical and it works for conveying information effectively and succinctly, but the tradeoff is that the reader feels somewhat detached (e.g. “phones of people who have not opted out of Google voice-search”, “anyone wishing to use WiFi to increase location accuracy must also allow his or her phone to act as a system for cataloging the location of WiFi access points”) and it downplays the immediacy of the problems at hand. You could work on making things more immediately relevant by directly addressing the reader about whether they've disabled voice recognition on their phone, whether they even know how to disable it, asking if they know what it means to use WiFi to increase location accuracy, etc.
- “In Google's business model, we are not their clients; we are their product.” This line stuck with me and I like the phrasing, but I don't see its link to the sentence before it.
- Your use of the quote by Juvenal (“Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?”) ties in well with the issues you bring up. Right now it's a passing mention near the end of the essay, but I would capitalize on it; making the concept of guarding the guard into a recurring motif throughout would drive the point of the essay home.
- The transition into the conclusion paragraph seems choppy. The conclusion itself is also rather short and anticlimactic considering the issues raised in the essay and their worrying implications. Depending on what, precisely, you intend to change about and/or add to the body, you might want to reiterate them in a way that'll leave as much of a lasting impression as some of the other lines you have.

## Minor Points

- In the introductory paragraph, I would set off the words “Google,” “OK,” and “Coca Cola” with quotation marks.
- Your body paragraphs are very clearly organized by topic, but they’re also long. I would split at least some of them into two or three smaller chunks.
- In the second to last paragraph alone, the word “thus” is used three times.
- In the last paragraph, “all that said” and “that being said” seem repetitive.

By Brynnydd Hamilton:

Cameron Kennedy Google Essay Peer Review

## Summary

This essay discusses the issue of Google’s ethics in regard to privacy. In order to provide information to its users, Google harvests an enormous amount of highly personal data, such as a person’s location, almost constant recording, and search habits. In addition, they control the dissemination of information through the ranking of results from the search engine. This essay questions whether the loss of privacy is worth the benefits of using Google products.

## Major Points

### A. Content

- a. I don’t quite understand how the second-to-last paragraph fits into the essay. I feel like it’s supposed to further the point of the preceding paragraph, but it took me a little while to figure that out. Is there a way that you could make the transition a little cleaner, so it’s clear that you’re still on the same topic?
- b. Your essay starts right off by telling the reader that Google is not as angelic as many people think it is. It may make your essay a little more dramatic and interesting if you started off by rhetorically asking the reader about their usage of Google. Think about the “show, don’t tell” theory.
- c. Your conclusion is very short. I know you said that you were trying to keep it vague until you have a better idea of where you’re going. I would suggest elaborating on your final sentence. Maybe take a stab at predicting what the life of someone who refuses to use Google would be like.
- d. One of the things that you don’t mention is *why* a loss of privacy is a bad thing. Could you talk more about the dangers that a transparent civilization brings? Maybe try bringing in examples of excessive data collection misuse.
- e. Make sure to define terms that may be unclear to your reader, like what Zipf’s law is.

### B. Organization

- a. Your essay has that “5 paragraph essay” style, where you have three main pieces of evidence: that Google is storing verbal data, that Google is storing location data, and that Google ranks the order that search results appear in. To me, the first two pieces of evidence fit together really well, but the third one felt a little disjointed. Is there a way that you could incorporate it better? Maybe try stating that Google controls collection and dissemination of information at the beginning, and then have two “body paragraphs” (they probably will be multiple paragraphs, because you have so much information). Then you can group all your thoughts into two spaces: the collection of information, and its dissemination.
- b. In addition, your paragraphs are very large. Cutting them up into small paragraphs may help your paper become more comprehensible.

#### C. Strength of Ideas

- a. I think that the central theme of your paper is pretty good. I don’t think that average people really assess the all-encompassing power of Google that much.

### Minor Points

#### A. Mechanical Issues

- a. Watch out for overly-long sentences. For example, “In order to process this information, phones of people who have not opted out of Google voice-search constantly send data from their microphones back to some central server somewhere for processing, and if these servers determine that the user’s intention was to learn something, they initiate a search.” This sentence could be split up into two sentences (maybe stop after “processing”) and it would be more understandable.

#### B. Miscellaneous

- a. I really like the beginnings of two of your body paragraphs – “Hello, Google,” and “One.” They sort of startle the reader, and make it clear that you’re starting on something new.