

DuckDuckGo

DuckDuckGo (also abbreviated as **DDG**) is an internet search engine that emphasizes protecting searchers' privacy and avoiding the filter bubble of personalized search results.^[3] DuckDuckGo distinguishes itself from other search engines by not profiling its users and by showing all users the same search results for a given search term.^[5]

The company is based in Paoli, Pennsylvania, in Greater Philadelphia and has 116 employees as of November 2020.^[2] The company name is a reference to the children's game duck, duck, goose.^{[6][7]}

Contents

Overview

Instant Answers

Tor access

Voice search

Bangs

Business model

Source code

History

Reception

Traffic

Controversy

See also

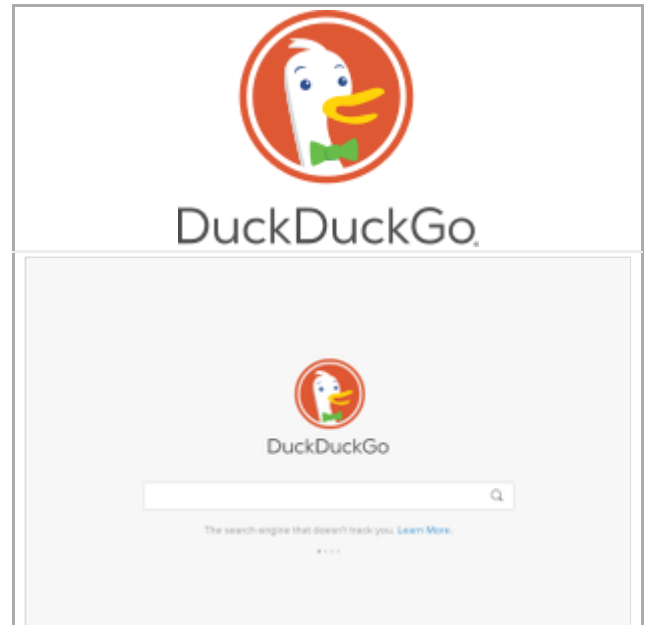
References

External links

Overview

DuckDuckGo's results are a compilation of "over 400" sources,^[8] including Yahoo! Search BOSS, Wolfram Alpha, Bing, Yandex, its own web crawler (the DuckDuckBot) and others.^{[3][8][9][10]} It also uses data from crowdsourced sites, including Wikipedia, to populate knowledge panel boxes to the right of the results.^{[10][11]} As of August 2020, it had 65,166,695 daily searches on average.^[12] DuckDuckGo positions itself as a search engine that puts privacy first and as such it does not store IP addresses, does not log user information, and uses

DuckDuckGo



Screenshot of DuckDuckGo home page as of 2018

Type of site	<u>Web search engine</u>
Available in	Multilingual
Headquarters	20 Paoli Pike <u>Paoli, Pennsylvania, U.S.</u>
Area served	Worldwide
Owner	Duck Duck Go, Inc. ^[1]
Created by	Gabriel Weinberg
URL	<u>duckduckgo.com</u> (<u>https://duckduckgo.com</u>)
Commercial	Yes
Registration	None
Launched	September 25, 2008 ^[2]
Current status	Active
Written in	<u>Perl</u> , ^[3] <u>JavaScript</u> , <u>Python</u> ^[4]

cookies only when required. Gabriel Weinberg, creator of DuckDuckGo, states: "By default, DuckDuckGo does not collect or share personal information. That is our privacy policy in a nutshell." It maintains logs of all search terms used "though not in a personally identifiable way".^[13]

Weinberg has refined the quality of his search engine results by deleting search results for companies he believes are content mills, such as Demand Media's eHow, which publishes 4000 articles per day produced by paid freelance writers, which Weinberg says is "low-quality content designed specifically to rank highly in Google's search index". DuckDuckGo also filters pages with substantial advertising.^[14]

Instant Answers

In addition to the indexed search results, DuckDuckGo displays relevant results, called Instant Answers, on top of the search page. These Instant Answers are collected from either third party APIs or static data sources like text files. The Instant Answers are called *zeroclickinfo* because the intention behind these is to provide what users are searching for on the search result page itself so that they do not have to click any results to find what they are looking for. Instant answers are created by and maintained by a community of over 1,500 open source contributors. This community has come to be known as DuckDuckHack.^[15] As of July 2019, there were 1236 Instant Answers active.^[16]

In the DuckDuckHack documentation (<https://duckduckhack.gitbook.io/duckduckhack-docs>), four types of Instant Answers are described: *Goodies*, *Spices*, *Fatheads*, and *Longtails*. These types of Instant Answer extensions are differentiated by how their data is retrieved. Goodies do not retrieve data from a third party API, where as Spices do. Goodies instead use some form of the aforementioned static data sources, such as text files or JSON files. Fathead Instant Answers are key-value answers hosted on DuckDuckGo's backend. Fathead key-value pairs function similarly to a trigger for showing the respective Instant Answer. Longtail Instant Answers are full text queries to a DuckDuckGo database of articles. Paragraphs or snippets from any matching articles are returned, and the section that matches the user's query is highlighted.^[17]

Tor access

In August 2010, DuckDuckGo introduced anonymous searching, including an exit enclave, for its search engine traffic using Tor network and enabling access through an onion service. This allows anonymity by routing traffic through a series of encrypted relays. Weinberg stated: "I believe this fits right in line with our privacy policy. Using Tor and DDG, you can now be end to end anonymous with your searching. And if you use our encrypted homepage, you can be end to end encrypted as well."^[18]

Voice search

In 2011, DuckDuckGo introduced voice search for users of the Google Chrome voice search extension.^[19]

Bangs

DuckDuckGo includes "!Bang" keywords, which give users the ability to search on specific third-party websites – using the site's own search engine if applicable. As of August 2020, 13,564 "bangs" for a diverse range of internet sites are available.^[20] In December 2018, around 2,000 "bangs" were deleted. Some of them were deleted due to being broken, while others, such as searches of pirated content sites, were deleted for liability reasons.^[21]

Business model

DuckDuckGo earns revenue by serving ads from the Yahoo-Bing search alliance network and through affiliate relationships with Amazon and eBay.^[22]

Source code

Some of DuckDuckGo's source code is free software hosted at GitHub under the Apache 2.0 License,^[23] but the core is proprietary.^[24] DuckDuckGo also hosts DuckDuckHack (<https://duckduckhack.com/>), a sister site for organizing open source contributions and community projects. The search engine's Instant Answers are open source^[25] and are maintained on GitHub, where anyone can view the source code. As of August 31, 2017, DuckDuckHack was placed on maintenance mode; as such, only pull requests for bug fixes will be approved.^[15]

History

DuckDuckGo was founded by Gabriel Weinberg on February 29, 2008, in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.^{[2][26]} Weinberg is an entrepreneur who previously launched Names Database, a now-defunct social network. Initially self-funded by Weinberg, DuckDuckGo is advertising-supported, but the user has the option to disable ads.^[27] The search engine is written in Perl^[28] and runs on nginx, FreeBSD, and Linux.^{[3][2][29]} DuckDuckGo is built primarily upon search APIs from various vendors. Because of this, TechCrunch characterized the service as a "hybrid" search engine.^{[30][31]} Weinberg explained the beginnings of the name with respect to the children's game duck, duck, goose. He said of the origin of the name: "Really it just popped in my head one day and I just liked it. It is certainly influenced/derived from duck duck goose, but other than that there is no relation, e.g., a metaphor."^[32] DuckDuckGo was featured on TechCrunch's Elevator Pitch Friday in 2008,^[30] and it was a finalist in the 2008 BOSS Mashable Challenge.^[33]

In July 2010, Weinberg started a DuckDuckGo community website (duck.co) to allow the public to report problems, discuss means of spreading the use of the search engine, request features, and discuss open sourcing the code.^[34] The company registered the domain name *ddg.gg* on February 22, 2011,^[35] and acquired *duck.com* in December 2018,^{[36][37][38]} which are used as shortened URL aliases that redirect to *duckduckgo.com*.

DuckDuckGo was self-funded until Union Square Ventures and angel investors invested in DuckDuckGo in October 2011. Union Square partner Brad Burnham stated, "We invested in DuckDuckGo because we became convinced that it was not only possible to change the basis of competition in search, it was time to do it."^{[26][40]} In addition, Trisquel, Linux Mint, and the Midori web browser switched to use DuckDuckGo as their default search engine.^[41]

By May 2012, the search engine was attracting 1.5 million searches a day. Weinberg reported that it had earned US\$115,000 in revenue in 2011 and had three employees, plus a small number of contractors.^[42] Compete.com estimated 266,465 unique visitors to the site in February 2012.^[43] On April 12, 2011, Alexa reported a 3-month growth rate of 51%.^[44] DuckDuckGo's own traffic statistics show that in August 2012 there were 1,393,644 visits per day, up from an average of 39,406 visits per day in April 2010 (the earliest data available).^[45] In a lengthy profile in November 2012, The Washington Post indicated that searches on DuckDuckGo numbered up to 45,000,000 per month in October 2012. The article concluded:

We didn't invest in it because we thought it would beat Google. We invested in it because there is a need for a private search engine. We did it for the Internet anarchists, people that hang out on Reddit and Hacker News.

— Fred Wilson, 2012
TechCrunch Disrupt
Conference in New York^[39]

Weinberg's non-ambitious goals make him a particularly odd and dangerous competitor online. He can do almost everything that Google or Bing can't because it could damage their business models, and if users figure out that they like the DuckDuckGo way better, Weinberg could damage the big boys without even really trying. It's asymmetrical digital warfare, and his backers at Union Square Ventures say Google is vulnerable.^[6]

GNOME released Web 3.10 on September 26, 2013, and starting with this version, the default search engine is DuckDuckGo.^{[46][47]}

At its keynote speech at WWDC 2014 on September 18, 2014, Apple announced that DuckDuckGo would be included as an option for search on both iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite in its Safari browser.^{[48][49][50]} On March 10, the Pale Moon web browser, starting with version 24.4.0, included DuckDuckGo as its default search engine, as well as listed it on the browser's homepage.^[51] In May 2014, DuckDuckGo released a redesigned version to beta testers through DuckDuckHack.^[52] On May 21, 2014, DuckDuckGo officially released the redesigned version that focused on smarter answers and a more refined look. The new version added many new features such as images, local search, auto-suggest, weather, recipes, and more.^[53]

On November 10, 2014, Mozilla added DuckDuckGo as a search option to Firefox 33.1.^[54] On May 30, 2016, The Tor Project, Inc made DuckDuckGo the default search engine for Tor Browser 6.0.^{[55][56][57]}

In July 2016, DuckDuckGo officially announced the extension of its partnership with Yahoo! that brought new features to all users of the search engine, including date filtering of results and additional site links. It also partners with Bing, Yandex, and Wikipedia to produce results or make use of features offered. The company also confirmed that it does not share user information with partner companies, as has always been its policy.^{[58][59]}

On January 23, 2018, DuckDuckGo revamped its browser extension and mobile app in an effort to keep Internet users safe “beyond the search box”. The revamped extension and app include a tool for rating websites based on their use of encryption and ad-tracking networks as well as the ability to block ad-tracking networks. The extension also provides Terms of service summaries from Terms of Service; Didn't Read.^[60]

In December 2018, it was reported that Google transferred ownership of the domain name Duck.com to DuckDuckGo. It is not known what price, if any, DuckDuckGo paid for the domain name.^[38]

On January 15, 2019, DuckDuckGo announced that all map and address-related searches would be powered by Apple Maps, both on desktop and mobile devices.^[61]

In March 2019, Google added DuckDuckGo to the default search engine list in Chrome 73.^[62]

Reception

In a June 2011 article, Harry McCracken of Time magazine commended DuckDuckGo, comparing it to his favorite hamburger restaurant, In-N-Out Burger:

It feels a lot like early Google, with a stripped-down home page. Just as In-N-Out doesn't have lattes or Asian salads or sundaes or scrambled eggs, DDG doesn't try to do news or blogs or books or images. There's no auto-completion or instant results. It just offers core Web search—mostly the “ten blue links” approach that's still really useful, no matter what its critics say ... As for the quality, I'm not saying that Weinberg has figured out a way to return more relevant results than Google's mighty search team. But DuckDuckGo ... is really good at bringing back useful sites. It all feels meaty and straightforward and filler-free ...^[63]

The barebones approach cited in his quote has since changed; DuckDuckGo now has auto-completion and instant results for example. McCracken included the site in *Time*'s list of "50 Best Websites of 2011".^[64]

Thom Holwerda, who reviewed the search engine for *OSNews*, praised its privacy features and shortcuts to site-specific searches as well as criticizing Google for "track[ing] pretty much everything you do", particularly because of the risk of such information being subject to a U.S. government subpoena.^[65] In 2012, in response to accusations that it was a monopoly, Google identified DuckDuckGo as a competitor. Weinberg was reportedly "pleased and entertained" by that acknowledgment.^[6]

In May 2020, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey revealed his preference for using the DuckDuckGo search engine rather than Google, stating, "I love DuckDuckGo. My default search engine for a while now. The app is even better!"^[66]

Traffic

In June 2013, DuckDuckGo indicated that it had seen a significant traffic increase; according to the website's *Twitter* account, on Monday, June 17, 2013, it had three million daily direct searches. On average during May 2013, it had 1.8 million daily direct searches. Some^[67] relate this claim to the exposure of *PRISM* and to the fact that other programs operated by the *National Security Agency* (NSA) were leaked by *Edward Snowden*. *Danny Sullivan* wrote on *Search Engine Land* that despite the search engine's growth "it's not grown anywhere near the amount to reflect any substantial or even mildly notable switching by the searching public" for reasons due to privacy, and he concluded "No One Cares About "Private" Search".^[68] In response, Caleb Garling of the *San Francisco Chronicle* argued: "I think this thesis suffers from a few key failures in logic" because a traffic increase had occurred and because there was a lack of widespread awareness of the existence of DuckDuckGo.^[69]



Traffic chart

Later in September 2013, the search engine hit 4 million searches per day^{[70][71][72]} and in June 2015, it hit 10 million searches per day.^[2] In November 2017, DuckDuckGo hit 20 million searches per day.^[2] In November 2019, DuckDuckGo hit 50 million searches per day^[73] and as of August 2020, was receiving 65,166,695 queries per day on average.^{[12][74]} On November 4, 2020, a record of 82,586,888 daily searches was achieved.^[12]

Controversy

In March 2018, DuckDuckGo introduced a feature to its Android browser app which retrieves the *favicon* of all visited websites from a service hosted by DuckDuckGo.^[75] Several users expressed their privacy concerns regarding this change.^[76] DuckDuckGo closed the issue referring to its privacy policy, which states that the service doesn't store any personal information. This feature was introduced in June 2019 to the iOS app as well.^[77]

In July 2020, this issue was brought up again on Hacker News and DDG CEO Weinberg promised to eliminate the issue by moving this feature directly into the app.^{[78][79]}

See also

- Comparison of web search engines
- List of search engines
- Timeline of web search engines

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External links

- [Official website \(https://duckduckgo.com\)](https://duckduckgo.com) 
 - [Video - Gabriel Weinberg speaks about DuckDuckGo \(https://vimeo.com/68099450\)](https://vimeo.com/68099450) at [Gel 2013](#)
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