The United States is the world’s role model of economic and expressive freedom. The U.S.’s foundation on free-market capitalism and near-complete freedom of speech is what allowed the country to become the world’s greatest hotbed of technological innovation. As search engines become increasingly influential in world culture, American society must take care to remember the values that sparked the success of Yahoo!, Ask.com, and, most prominently, Google, in the U.S. If the government attempts to control Google, it risks losing the vast positive economic and social benefits the search engine offers, as well as the opportunity for the tech industry to develop organically, in favor of more inhibiting European or even Chinese policy style. Therefore, implementing controls on search engines should be avoided completely.

First of all, while some companies do fall victim to Google’s PageRank software, the economic boom Google causes vastly outweighs the few casualties. It is true that, intentionally or not, some companies are unfairly discriminated against in search rankings, making controls an attractive option. In the words of *Blown to Bits*, “The game occasionally claims collateral victims…One day, Google tweaked its algorithm to combat manipulation. Montcrief’s innocent site fell to the twenty-fifth page, with disastrous consequences” (151). Google is not at fault for doing their best to optimize search for their users, however, and the unintended consequence on innocent sites like Montcrief’s is preventable if the companies keep vigilant. In *The New York Times*’ article, “Google Casts a Big Shadow on Smaller Web Sites,” the article mentions the potential for disaster, but closes by saying, “[Nextag] has also shifted its strategy to become less vulnerable to Google’s
charge into commerce...less dependent on Google.” Success is still in the hands of the individual companies, not Google, and only companies that carelessly rely on Google’s support may be ruined. With reported revenue generation of $80 billion for 1.8 million businesses, and the only victims being those who have the power to avoid consequence if they are careful, the benefit of allowing Google free reign over its technology to optimize economic productivity far outweighs the few negative results.

There is a recurring notion that controls should be placed on Google to protect other companies and consumers from the dangers of its monopolization of the market. If anything, Google and its consumers should fear the dangers the government could cause by attempting intervention. An example from recent history that echoes Google’s current position is the case of Microsoft. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Microsoft was booming, and many feared that the company would permanently take over the tech industry and handicap its future. Only a few years later, Microsoft has been dethroned by more efficient companies that are most in-tune with consumer desires. Google is the powerhouse of the hour, but society need not fear for the long-term safety of consumers. While Google controls two-thirds of worldwide search, social sites like Facebook and Twitter are instead starting “to become the lenses through which we view the digital landscape,” *(Bits* 110), disrupting the search engine industry. Placing handicaps on Google for its current monopoly status, therefore, would only have short-term effects. Furthermore, it would weaken Google’s current ability to maintain its slogan, “Don’t be evil.” As Peter Thiel explains in Business Insider’s *Peter Thiel: Google Has Insane Perks Because It's A Monopoly*, “Google's motto ‘Don't be evil’ [is] characteristic of a kind of business that's successful enough to take ethics seriously without jeopardizing its own existence.” Place controls on Google, and the government will only
succeed in keeping Google from positively using the breathing room it has earned by being efficient enough to become monopolistic, and in the end the consumers will be the victims.

Authorities must let Google decide what is appropriate use of its power, because the alternative is a worldwide shadow of China’s policies. China’s decision to censor Google and handicap the company to the point where less efficient companies are more commonly used reflects the fact that the Chinese government serves itself, not the people. Alternatively, having no middleman promotes maximum efficiency and service, because Google works directly with the consumer. *Bits* suggests, “Too often, well-intentioned efforts to regulate technology are far worse than the imagined evils they were intended to prevent” (159). In Europe, the move by governments to change Google’s privacy policy is the latest attempt to regulate in the name of consumers. If consumers did not like the policy, they would simply change services, which some already are doing by using Facebook or Twitter as alternative information sources. It is essential to remember that Google must rely on its shining reputation to remain individuals’ go-to Internet service. Instead of allowing change to occur organically, though, the European governments are wasting money and time trying to reform Google’s policies, claiming “that greater transparency could actually be a competitive advantage for Google” (Europe Presses Google to Change Privacy Policy, NYT). Deciding for one of the most successful companies in the world what is or is not a competitive advantage is a mistake. The United States making similar moves would betray the free-market values that made the US the world’s role model of economic success, and bred the country’s many dominating companies, including Google. While it may seem like government organizations are working in the name of the people, controlling Google would actually be harming individuals at the end of the day.
Ultimately, Google is not as all-powerful as so many authorities fear, and should not be handicapped by such a reputation. The company victims to its monopolization are strikingly few compared to the companies it has improved. Long-term, Google is no better than any other company that made all the right decisions at the right time for its era, and will be dislodged as soon as other companies that are even more efficient arise, which is already beginning to happen. In the meantime, Google will continue to serve users as well as possible—as long as the government stays out of the way.

Bibliography


Lohr, Steve “Google Casts a Big Shadow on Smaller Web Sites”. 3 Nov. 2012