

Battelle, John. The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture. New York: Portfolio, 2006.

In addition to writing *The Search*, John Battelle is a cofounding editor of technology magazines *Wired* and *The Industry Standard*. Battelle also publishes *John Battelle's Searchblog*, self-described "thoughts on the intersection of search, media, technology, and more." In the BusinessWeek Bestseller's opening chapter, the author describes his discovery of the 2001 Google Zeitgeist, a year-end summary of search patterns and trends. Battelle realized that the search term changes following the September 2001 terror attacks (gaining queries "Nostradamus" and "anthrax" vs. declining queries "Pokemon" and "Napster," for example) indicated cultural momentum. He writes: "Google had more than its finger on the pulse of our culture, it was directly jacked into our cultural nervous system" (2). Battelle refers to the "millions of daily transactions, utterances, behaviors, and links that form the Web's foundation" (17) as the "Database of Intentions." As told by Battelle, Google's story represents not only one company's effort to harness the intelligence of this database but also the story of search, or the effort to find and organize knowledge in a way that's accessible to users.

In chapters such as "Search Before Google," "Google Is Born," "The Search Economy," and "Google Goes Public," Battelle describes the evolution of Google, Inc.. He places the company's rise from its Stanford University beginnings to its 2004 initial public offering within a greater context: the development of search engine technology and the rise and fall of commercial search engines and the companies offering them. In this sense, *The Search* is both a history of Google and a history of the Internet and search technology.

It is not difficult to argue the value of Battelle's work to special libraries. Information professionals are already paying attention to Google; an April 2009 query of the Library

Literature and Information Science Full Text database (search term “Google (Web site)”) yielded hundreds of results. A glance at just the titles of a few of the retrieved articles gives us an idea of what librarians are writing, reading, and asking about Google:

Cahill, K.. “An Opportunity, Not a Crisis: How Google Is Changing the Individual and the Information Profession.” Journal of Library Administration 47.1/2 (2008): 67-75.

Carr, N. “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” Illinois Library Association Reporter 26.6 (2008):14-16, 18-21.

Herring, M. Y.. “Fool's Gold: Why the Internet Is No Substitute for a Library.” Journal of Library Administration 47.1/2 (2008): 29-53.

Murray, L.. “Giggling Over Google: Using Google Docs and Google Custom Search Engines for Web 2.0 Information Literacy Practices.” Against the Grain 20.3 (2008): 28, 30, 32.

Nicholas, D., et. al. “In praise of Google.” Library & Information Update (December 2008): 44-5.

Sorensen, C., et. al.. “Google in the Research and Teaching of Instruction Librarians.” The Journal of Academic Librarianship 34.6 (2008): 482-8.

From the Google Book Search Settlement (briefly addressed in a chapter added after the book's first publishing in 2005) to Google Scholar, Boolean operators to “deep” web searching, librarians are talking about Google. Issues of privacy and PATRIOT Act requests are also of concern to both libraries and the company; the American Library Association dedicates a section of its website to the Act while Battelle dedicates his book's eight chapter to “Search, Privacy, Government, and Evil.” Any librarian can relate to this, from Battelle: “Thanks to search, we must confront one of the most significant and difficult issues a democracy can face: the balance between a citizen's right to privacy and someone's- be it a corporation, a government, or another citizen- right to know” (193).

Beyond the story of Google (Web site), special librarians and their managers can benefit from the story of Google (Company). Google Inc.'s story underscores the importance of providing excellent service and good stewardship of resources, as early investors “expected the founders to deliver a profitable business model. [The company's founders] had spent nearly all of their time improving the service” and needed to expand their focus to include partnerships, sponsorships, and other concerns (91). Battelle's book also reminds us that it is okay to try new

things and to start small. Regarding the company's marketing, one early employee said that what he was uncertain of what to do. "Our competitors had huge marketing budgets- AltaVista was spending \$120 million on marketing in 1999. I figured we needed a logo, so I started with that" (127). The book also points to the importance of customer service and addressing user needs. Battelle notes that by 2003 Google's AdWords service had millions of clients, yet the company offered minimal customer service, preferring automated interactions. "This left many advertisers cold... advertisers began to regularly bash Google for its seeming indifference to their issues" (148).

Information professionals will also relate to Battelle's analogies. He relates Google's Page Rank function to citation studies and bibliometrics (71-75) and describes a world of perfect search as "an intelligent agent... a reference librarian with complete mastery of the entire corpus of human knowledge" (252).

While Battelle's book is a fast and engaging read, the busy professional can take advantage of the descriptive chapter titles and extensive index to select and read about topics of particular interest, such as academic publishing, classification, domain-specific search, folksonomies, semantic Web, or Wikipedia, among dozens of others. Others might wish to explore the author's fore mentioned blog, which offers searchable archives and both full-text and "excerpt only" syndication options.

Google's goal of organizing the world's information and making it accessible (248) is also the goal of the information profession. Information professionals will find value in Google's story, its business, and the business of search.

Works Cited

Battelle, John. John Battelle's Searchblog. 28 April 2008. <<http://battellemedia.com/>>

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