CONTENTS

List of illustrations	х
Acknowledgements	xiv
Introduction: Investigating Google's search engine	1
Google's dominance	2
The three steps of how search engines work: Crawling, ranking, and	
query results	4
Step one: Crawling	4
Step two: Ranking	4
Step three: Query results	8
Five key challenges of studying Google's search engine	10
One: Multiple actors: Search engine optimization and economic	
incentives	11
Two: Moving targets	11
Three: Each search a partial viewpoint	12
Four: No real alternatives	13
Five: The myth of black boxes	14
Chapter outlines	15
Chapter 1: Understanding Google queries and the problem of inter	ntions 16
Chapter 2: Google's impact on cognition and memory: Histories,	
concepts, and technosocial practices	16
Chapter 3: Autocomplete: Stereotypes, biases, and designed discrim	nination 17
Chapter 4: Google's search engine results: What is a relevant result?	? 17
Chapter 5: The real cost of search engines: Digital advertising, lingu	istic
capitalism, and the rise of fake news	18
Notation and examples	18
1 Understanding Google queries and the problem of intentions	21
Introduction	21
Categorizing how and what people search	23
The roles of search engines and information retrieval's question of	why 24
Query length and the problems of intention	28
All information is ethical: Searching for [food for snakes]	30
Predicting intentions with a lack of information: Plato, Gadamer, and I	Derrida 32
Gadamer's hermeneutics and Plato's fears of deception	35
Google's algorithms and Derrida's monster	38

Contents

	What kinds of things do people search Google for?	40
	Google trends, Brexit, and 'frantically' googling after the EU referendum	42
	Conclusion	47
2	Google's impact on cognition and memory: Histories, concepts, and	
	technosocial practices	49
	Introduction	49
	Google's impact on cognition and memory	50
	Kinds of recall from extended minds to transactive memory	54
	Technosocial memory practices from oral culture to digital literacy	57
	The legacy of naturalized technologies	60
	Truth and knowledge for Plato	62
	Aristotle's sensory approach	64
	Technosocial memory before Google: The Ars Memoria	65
	The science and magic of search	68
	Treating the mind as technology: Bacon, Hooke, and modern psychology	73
	Conclusion	77
3	Autocomplete: Stereotypes, biases, and designed discrimination	79
	Introduction	79
	The desire for a digital oracle	82
	Autocomplete's minimal academic attention	85
	The biases of Autocomplete: Stereotypes and discrimination	88
	Predicting and shaping user attitudes: The origins of Autocomplete	93
	So, how does Autocomplete operate?	95
	Second-order stereotyping: Sexist suggestions for female scientists	97
	RankBrain and the biases of machine learning	104
	Automated misogyny for every individual	113
	Speed	116
	Speed and judgement: Time to reflect	120
	Conclusion	126
4	Google's search engine results: What is a relevant result?	129
	Introduction	129
	'Quantifiable signals' and Malawian witch doctors	131
	What should search engine results be?	132
	The Idealists: Search is democratic, relevance can be measured	
	objectively, and answers can exist independently of bias	134
	The difficulty with measuring relevance	136
	The Contextualists: Search is undemocratic, relevance is a measure of	
	personalization, and all answers are inherently biased	139
	Are search results personalized?	141

	Contents
Methodological challenges of studying search engines	143
Particular considerations for collecting search engine results	144
Variables that matter: Search experiments in 2015, 2017, and 2021	146
The rationale behind focusing on same-sex sexual orientation	146
Queries used	148
Capturing the spread of results from the first page	149
Evaluation method	150
Google's public position on how they provide results	150
Summary of 2015 results	155
How do variations in terminology and phrasing alter search results?	161
Unimaginable communities	166
How search results change throughout time: 2015, 2017, and 2021	167
Longitudinal overview: Official languages in each domain	168
Terminology throughout time: 'Homosexual' versus 'gay'	173
Phrasing throughout time: 'Good' versus 'wrong'	177
Conclusion	179
5 The real cost of search engines: Digital advertising, linguistic	
capitalism, and the rise of fake news	181
Introduction	181
The economics of google	182
The context of post-Fordism	184
AdWords: Organic versus sponsored results	185
AdWords: The multilingual linguistic market and an economy of bias	187
Google's institutionalization, data collection, and advertising	191
AdWords in the context of 'The Magic System'	193
AdWords and the general intellect	195
The economic profits of discrimination	197
Private profits and public losses	200
Google's international expansion	202
AdSense and post-Fordism: The cost of Google's billboards	203
AdSense and fake news in the 2016 US presidential election	204
The reciprocal relationship between AdSense and Facebook	207
Conclusion	211
Conclusion: What if search engines were actually built to benefit users?	213
Bibliography	217
Index	234