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Whole Web Catalog: Mash-up Tools

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Taking the ambivalences of both the *Whole Earth Catalog* and the Internet, *Whole Web Catalog* is an ongoing web search engine that explores the space between a sharing global community and a whole system control. Connected to various information services and datasets through open APIs, *Whole Web Catalog* is a mash-up tool to already existing tools, that returns an assemblage of information in order to get non-unilateral responses. While being an alternative tool to corporate search engines, it also questions the relevance of the information available in open datasets.

1. CONTEXT: FROM EARTH TO WEB

“I like to think
(it has to be!) of a cybernetic ecology
where we are free of our labors
and joined back to nature”
(Brautigan, 1967)

The first *Whole Earth Catalog* (*WEC*), edited by Stewart Brand, was published in 1968, as a source book for the back-to-the-land movements of the 1960s American counterculture. With the subtitle “access to tools”, it did not only express the belief of social change through tools, but also, and according to Roger Perry (2011), it “started to define ‘tools’ very widely, including intellectual instruments such as books, maps, and pamphlets”. Inside the *WEC*, products were listed if they were deemed: useful as a tool, relevant to independent education, high quality or low cost, not already common knowledge, easily available by mail (Brand 1968, 3). Along with the review, the products were listed with the price, and although the *WEC* didn’t sell any of them, the vendor’s contact information was included. Outside, it was covered with the NASA’s photograph of Earth seen from space. It was the first time that such perspective of the Earth as a whole was published. A powerful image that works not only as a metaphor for the idea of a global community, but also of a whole system.

At the same time, particularly in the bay area of San Francisco, a changing perspective has appeared: up until that moment technology had been associated with military and oppressive power, however, from that point onward, it became a tool for social transformation and political liberation.¹ Mainly, the small technologies that arose as alternative forms for change and creation of a new non-hierarchical social order and of a new consciousness.² According to Fred Turner, *WEC* had an important role in this process as it “established a relationship between information technology, economic activity, and alternative forms of community that would outlast the counterculture itself and become a key feature of the digital world” (Turner 2005, 488). Especially with the understanding of the power of a peer-to-peer network, in which the contemporary concept of the Internet is founded.³ However, following Zach Blas (2017) questioning:

When and how did the Internet transition from a site of immense political potentiality to a premiere arena of control, surveillance, and hegemony?

In fact, nowadays the Internet is this place where the relationship between technology, information, economy and community is established through the same peer-to-peer network. Yet, it is also a place where an amount of information which has never been shared can be, while it is controlled by the government and private corporations with unclear agendas, through algorithms that no one really knows what they are doing, which are not only returning information, but are also extracting it from us. So, the willingness to share and the demand for information capitalization has transformed

1. See Lee Worden (2006).
2. See Fred Turner (2005, 487) and Lee Worden (2006).
3. See Fred Turner (2013, 47).

the Internet, similarly to the *WEC* cover metaphor, into an ambivalent place between a sharing global community and a whole system of control.

2. THE WHOLE WEB CATALOG: MASHUP TOOLS

2.1. Concept

Taking the statement from Steve Jobs “it [WEC] was sort of like Google in paperback form, 35 years before Google came”, and the ambivalence of both the *Whole Earth Catalog* and the Internet, *Whole Web Catalog (WWC)* is an ongoing web search engine that explores the space between a sharing global community and a whole system control. Connected to various information services and datasets through open APIs,⁴ *WWC* is a mash-up tool of already existing tools, that returns an assemblage of information in order to get non-unilateral responses for each search. It is an alternative tool to corporate search engines, refusing the imposed order by algorithms such as PageRank or Yahoo Web Rank. At the same time, it also questions the relevance of information available in open datasets through its crossing and by amplifying its use.

2.2. Mechanics and Experience

Whole Web Catalog it is a website (wholewebcatalog.org) connected to an ongoing list of APIs freely available on the Internet. On the index page, unlike the image of the Earth seen from space, it has a visualization of the space data made available by NASA and Open Notify APIs. Whenever a search is performed, rather than displaying a URLs ranking list, the results page is composed by draggable boxes, which are presented in random order and populated with the information from each API according to its own specifications. This information can be visualized in text, image or video format and, similarly to *WEC* priced products, through AFINN Sentiment Analysis,⁵ the text information is accompanied by a sentimental analysis value (a kind of a new currency that is a form of visualization / capitalization of information). The value is given in *sents*, a made-up currency, which has the particularity of having negative values. After having recomposed the results page by dragging the boxes, the user can save an image or let go of it, as this page will never be accessed again in the same way, since its information can either not be displayed in the same order, or can change when new APIs are added to the system. In the end, the total value of the *sents* is calculated and, if the result is positive, a “yes” gif from the Yes or No API⁶ is returned, otherwise, the system will return a “no” gif.

4. “(...) it [API] refers to a tool, or library, that assists developers in writing code that interfaces with other software. (...) It defines a way in which a computer program communicates with another computer program” (Hughes, 2015).

5. AFINN Sentiment Analysis available at: <http://darenr.github.io/afinn/>

6. Yes or No API available at: <https://yesno.wtf/>

Fig. 1. Index page.



Fig. 2. Results page.

BEYONCE

Wikipedia definition

- Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter (, born September 4, 1981) is an American singer, songwriter, dancer, actress, and businesswoman.
- Beyoncé is the eponymous fifth solo album by American recording artist Beyoncé, released on December 13, 2013 by Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records.
- American singer and songwriter Beyoncé has released six studio albums, four live albums, three compilation albums, five EPs, one soundtrack album, one mixtape, two karaoke albums, and 62 singles (including 12 as a featured artist, nine promotional singles and five charity singles).
- American singer, songwriter and actress Beyoncé has released various music videos. She first appeared in the 1999 music video for Case's "Happily Ever After", after which she made her film debut as the lead in the direct-to-video musical Carmen: A Hip Hopera (2001).
- Beyoncé's Platinum Edition is the first box set by American singer Beyoncé, released on November 24, 2014, by Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records.

Instagram Feed

Google suggests

- beyonce
- beyonce net worth
- beyonce coachella 2018
- beyonce age
- beyonce lemonade
- beyonce tour
- beyonce jay z
- beyonce songs
- beyonce height
- beyonce portugal

2 sents

New York Times articles

- Review: Beyoncé Is Bigger Than Coachella
- Beyoncé and Jay-Z: The State of the Union Is Strong
- Covering Beyoncé and the Surprise Album Drop
- Beyoncé and Jay-Z Deliver a Surprise Album: 'Everything Is Love'
- At the Louvre, Beyoncé and Jay-Z Are Both Outsiders and Heirs
- Beyoncé and the End of Respectability Politics
- Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar Break Boundaries
- 8 Seconds of Summer Keeps Beyoncé and Jay-Z Out of Too Soon

Fig. 3. Print page examples, before and after drag.

BEYONCE

Wikipedia definition

Instagram Feed

Google suggests

New York Times articles

Wikipedia related articles

Form Web Search

0 sents

BEYONCE

Instagram Feed

Wikipedia definition

New York Times articles

Search image

Wikipedia related articles

Google suggests

Form Web Search

6 sents

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