Cirio

Advertising has become a parasite on human communication – always positioning itself in the middle of human interactions, activities and, recently, even social relations. It's terrible to see idiotic banners in private communications when you are merely researching a topic, reading a book or watching a movie. A 1979 law in France codifed the notion of "visual pollution," which it suggests may be caused by the position, dimensions, density and flickering of billboard advertising in public spaces. What about internet web space? Is the widespread introduction of banners into our contemporary means of expression not a form of pollution? Nobody can avoid the advertising served by Google, not only from its search engine but also through DoubleClick networks and Google-owned platforms like YouTube. It can't be escaped in the blogosphere, which is rife with the AdSense service. There is just no way to escape its empire. Google is reproducing the same old corporatism model of the analog media monopoly, where one company has ownership of several networks, channels and media. Most of Noam Chomsky's analyses in *Manufacturing Consent*, his book about the controlling of broadcast content and the forces that regulate political power, social controls, advertising markets and slavish publishers, are still valid in the internet era. Google plays one of the biggest roles in creating these conditions. In an even worse scenario, Google will digitize all human cultural heritage. Should we expect that it will all be sponsored? It already happens in Google Book Service – you can read a book with advertising included in the pages – it's horrible. People must have the right to see or not see advertising on the main media used for communication and the expansion of knowledge. Isn't it about liberty?

The idea of fighting back against Google's ad machine – of jamming it to reclaim privacy and autonomy of thought – strikes some as nonsensical and perhaps illegal. But for mental environmentalists it's a battle against an information virus that is attacking the center of our system. Those opposed to Google's methods believe that information should be commercial-free. They feel betrayed by the company's commercialization of knowledge, a practice that began in earnest when Google introduced ads on results pages back in 2000 and peaked with Google's purchase of DoubleClick, which gives the company control over ad space on the majority of internet sites. Critics also point to the philosophical consequences of Google's success because it results in the commodification and flattening of culture. One well-known futurist and tech visionary – who wished to remain anonymous – recently told us that "making advertising into the central business model for human communications and collaboration really creeps me out."

So *Adbusters* contributing editor Micah White asked some of the most respected digital luminaries in the field what they thought.

Howard Rheingold is the author of *The Virtual Community, Tools for Thought* and *Smart Mobs*, serves as a research fellow at the Institute of the Future and teaches at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University.


Jimmy Wales is the cofounder of Wikipedia.

Richard Stallman is a software freedom activist, hacker and software developer. He pioneered the concept of copyleft and is the main author of several copyleft licenses. He is the cofounder of the League for Programming Freedom.

Paolo Cirio is a tactile media artist who works in the fields of net-art, street-art, video-art, public-art, marketing-art and software-art.
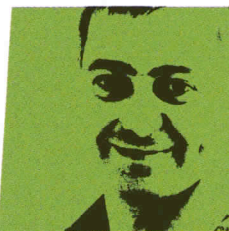
Alessandro Ludovico is a media critic and the editor in chief of *Neural* magazine. He organized the Liberation Technologies conference in Italy and conducts the weekly radio show Neural Stations.

Ricardo Dominguez is a cofounder of the Electronic Disturbance Theater and the senior editor of the *Thing*. He is a member of the hybrid performance group Fakeshop and has collaborated on a number of international net-art projects.

Hans Bernhard is a founding member of the legendary etoy. CORPORATION and of UBERMORGEN.COM.

Oxblood Ruffin is the Foreign Minister of the hacker group Cult of the Dead Cow and the founder and executive director of Hacktivismo.

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