A Plan for Ancillary Copyright

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What the heck is ancillary copyright and why do we call it the Link Tax ...
https://openmedia.org/.../what-heck-ancillary-copyright-and-why-do-we-call-it-link-ta...
May 5, 2016 - The laws backfired, providing not a single additional cent to publishers (or journalists) as aggregators shut down or received free licenses from publishers faced with drops in their website traffic. So you'd be among good company if you were confused about why this idea is on the table to be ...
Disclaimer:

- We received funding from the Innovation Fund of the Google Digital News Initiative in the prototype track for an unrelated project on clickbait detection technology.

- Opinions expressed in this talk are my own. They have not been influenced by, nor do they necessarily correspond to those of my employer.
Ancillary Copyright for Press Publishers
Act on Copyright and Related Rights (German: Urheberrechtsgesetz, UrhG)

Section 87f
Publishers of newspapers and magazines

(1) The producer of a press product (publisher of newspapers and magazines) shall have the exclusive right to make the press product or parts thereof available to the public for commercial purposes, unless it consists of individual words or very short text excerpts. Where the press product has been produced within a company, the owner of the company shall be the producer.

(2) A press product shall be the editorial and technical preparation of journalistic contributions in the context of a collection published periodically on any media under one title, which, following an assessment of the overall circumstances, can be regarded as largely typical for the publishing house and the overwhelming majority of which does not serve self-advertising purposes. Journalistic contributions are, more specifically, articles and illustrations which serve to disseminate information, form opinions or entertain.
Ancillary copyright is also called neighboring rights or related rights.

The amendment has been passed into law in Germany effective August 2013.

The clause “unless it consists of individual words or very short text excerpts” was not part of the original draft.

In the pending case of collecting society VG Media vs. Google Inc., tried before the regional court of Berlin, the length of “very short” has been debated. In an arbitration at the German Patent and Trade Mark Office a maximum of 7 words was proposed as a threshold. The judge presiding over the case demanded a more “objective” scale, suggesting lengths of up to 20 words.

Plaintiff demands as much as 11% of the defendant’s revenue resulting from the use of publishers’ texts.

The case is currently resting over a technicality: the draft of the law has not been submitted to review by the European Union, rendering its legal status doubtful. Questions regarding this issue have been submitted to the European Court of Justice.

A stricter law has been passed in Spain in 2015, causing the shutdown of the Spanish version of Google News.

Meanwhile, the European Commission is debating an ancillary copyright for all of the member states of the European Union.

They asked the Joint Research Center (JRC) to carry out a study on whether ancillary copyright has any merits for market development. When the report did not turn out to be in favor of the law, it was not published in due course but had to be actively “leaked” via a FOIA request.
Ancillary Copyright for Press Publishers
Arguments Pro Ancillary Copyright

“Unfair” use:

- Snippets on search results pages reuse text from the linked page
- Search engines display ads alongside organic search results
- Search engines earn money from third party content
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Monopoly dependency:
- Publishers publish their content free of charge
- Publishers earn money from displaying ads alongside their content
- Publishers need to attract visitors to their content
- Publishers depend on information intermediaries for their traffic
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The Reuse Paradox: (coined by [Taraborelli 2015] when talking about Wikipedia Reuse)

- Snippets are query-biased, reusing text that matches the query
- Snippets may contain information relevant to the user’s information need
- A well-composed snippet may sufficiently answer a user’s need
- The user may choose not to visit a publisher’s web page
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Arguments Con Ancillary Copyright

Quid pro quo:

- Publishers publish their content free of charge
- Search engines index content and provide the search interface free of charge
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Effective information society:
- Information society needs strong search technology
- Strong search technology requires an effective user interface
- User interfaces are most effective when employing snippets as preview
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- Even under ancillary copyright, Google would survive
- Entry barriers are erected for startups, and market disruption is foreclosed
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Principle of equal treatment:
- Publishers publish information relevant to readers’ businesses
- If search engines have to pay a share of their revenue resulting from their use of news for snippets, so should companies who extract business intelligence
How to pick sides in a Clash of the Titans?
How to pick sides in a Clash of the Titans?

Will they make sure not to step on anyone?
Ancillary Copyright for Press Publishers
How to pick sides in a Clash of the Titans?

For all their good intentions, both search engines and publishers are profit-seeking enterprises. They’ll act accordingly.
Ancillary Copyright for Press Publishers
How to pick sides in a Clash of the Titans?

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Attack tactics of news publishers:

- Lobbyism
- Propaganda (politicians of the pro faction openly asked for it to the applause of leading representatives of German news publishers [uebermedien.de])
- Clickbait (i.e., exploiting intermediaries by misusing them)
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Defense tactics of Google, representing the search industry:

- Lobbyism (apparently less effective)
- Funding / outreach: Google Digital News Initiative (Innovation Fund, AMP, ...)
- Technology?
- Withdrawal (neither ads nor snippets on Google News; asking for waivers from publishers [googleblog.de]; shutdown if need be)
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Remarks:

- Google News has been shut down in Spain.
- Google News now omits snippets worldwide, yet not on the main search engine’s news facet:
With the rise of deep learning technology, our ability to synthesize text has significantly improved.

Therefore, we raise the following research question:

Can query-biased snippets be automatically generated without reusing text from a retrieved web page?

Based on a working snippet synthesis the entire debate may be upended.
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Bootstrapping snippet synthesis in four steps:

1. Experimental environment for reproducible search engine research
2. User study on snippet preference: reuse snippets vs. paraphrased snippets
3. TL;DR corpus and challenge on summarization technology [tldr-challenge.github.io]
4. Snippet synthesis with deep generative models
Bootstrapping Snippet Synthesis in Four Steps
Step 1: Experimental Environment ChatNoir

[ECIR 2018]
Bootstrapping Snippet Synthesis in Four Steps

Step 2: Snippet Generation User Study (submitted to SIGIR 2018)

How to turn reuse snippets into original ones: paraphrase them. Paraphrasing technology is still in its infancy.
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We designed a user study to answer the following questions:

- Which kind of snippet do users prefer in a direct comparison?
- How does snippet originality affect click-through on relevant results?

Using TREC topics from the web tracks, we obtain reuse snippets for relevant and non-relevant documents from Google, and original snippets by recruiting workers from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to paraphrase them.

We also conduct control experiment to verify that workers understand the respective tasks and are capable of solving it.
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A careful statistical analysis reveals:

- Users do not prefer either kind of snippet, nor fail to spot relevant results.
- Users to prefer high-quality snippets over low-quality ones.
Bootstrapping Snippet Synthesis in Four Steps
Step 3: TL;DR Corpus and Challenge

A snippet generator that produces original texts based on arbitrary web pages and queries needs to be trained with a high topic diversity.

Yet, existing document summarization corpora are seasoned and almost exclusively from the news domain. The largest one available: English Gigaword; 4 million units.
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We have identified a news source of summary ground truth: TL;DR on social media. Mining Reddit, we compiled a corpus of 4 million post-summary.

To foster the development of new deep generative summarization technology, we organize the TL;DR challenge, a shared task competition.

Pending application at SemEval 2019.
Bootstrapping Snippet Synthesis in Four Steps

Step 4: Connecting the dots...

Key to building snippet synthesis technology are training data.

We identify two sources of data:

1. Text-summary-pairs from summarization corpora.
2. TL;DR summaries mined from Reddit.

Matching queries are extracted from the aforementioned texts.

To obtain a suitable ground truth for testing, we ask workers recruited at Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to paraphrase Google reuse snippets for documents judged relevant to TREC topics.

Using deep generative models, we bootstrap snippet synthesis.
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Thank you for your attention!