



Dear Publishing Professional,

Thanks to Matt Bailey and the good folks at New Media Academy, I had the great honor of speaking at the Global Media Congress in Abu Dhabi. This issue starts with a summary of that talk, followed by my takeaways. Let me know how I can help you in these challenging times!

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## Google, Publishers, and Artificial Intelligence: Conflict, Disruption, and Dominance

This isn't a mystery novel, so here's the bottom line.

- Publishers want their content to be available *conditionally*.
- Google wants content to be free, supported by ads, which they control.
- AI wants to use all content to create a new product that makes publishers obsolete.
- Publishers have a short window in which to defend their rights.

To get the full picture, let's review the history

### Technology disrupts copyright

Do you remember copying an LP onto a cassette? I did it so I could listen in my car, but I probably also loaned copies to friends. That was a clear copyright violation, but everybody did it – partly because the technology made it so easy. And technology continues to make it easier every year. Digital files have made it trivially easy.

The Internet promoted an attitude that “information wants to be free,” and that copyright was an old-fashioned and backwards idea. Napster might be the poster child for this attitude. It allowed people to share digital copies of their music. It was a straight-forward copyright violation, but people loved it.

Napster users may have justified file sharing because of the difference between physical and digital media. If I borrow your book, you don't have the book any more. But if I make a copy of your digital recording, you still have it. I haven't harmed you. I may have harmed the copyright owner, but they're rich fat cats who cheat anyway, so who cares?

Napster lost the battle over copyright, but the copyright anarchists are winning the war.

### Google as a wolf in sheep's clothing

Google's incredible search engine ended the prominence of link farms and directory websites. The Google bot crawled websites, indexed content, and used a variety of factors

– like keywords, links, and user experience – to deliver accurate and useful results that helped web browsers find information quickly and efficiently.

Publishers allowed Google to download their copyrighted information into this black box of indexes and algorithms because it was an effective means of content discovery. **The implied bargain was that Google was allowed to copy and index your content for the purpose of sending traffic to your website.**

Publishers didn't have the foresight to put that in writing.

While all this was going on, nobody noticed the clear implication of Google's mission statement, which is to “organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.” “Universally accessible” means free, supported by ads – which Google controls.

This difference in vision put Google and publishers at odds.

## **The answer box foreshadowed ChatGPT**

Google provides a great product for the consumer, and they keep making it better all the time. A few years ago, if you searched “how tall is Reese Witherspoon,” the first result would be a link to a website that made a business out of finding personal details on celebrities and optimizing their content according to their best guess at Google's rules. When the searcher clicked through, the website got a nickel in ad revenue.

Now, Google just gives you the answer. (5' 1".)

Think about that. The Google computers don't know how tall Reese Witherspoon is – except for the fact that they've downloaded the information from somebody's website. Maybe from the very website that used to be the first link on the results page.

Some business went to the trouble to gather and organize all sorts of data on celebrities, and Google simply stole that information from them for their own purposes.

In other words, **Google has fundamentally changed the search bargain.** They aren't indexing publisher content so searchers find and visit the publisher's website. They're using publisher content to displace the publisher.

**“I am altering the deal,” Darth Vader said. “Pray I don't alter it any further.”**

## **The era of search is ending**

Two years ago, if I wanted to know the rules for Go, I'd do a search, then pick a likely page and hope it had what I wanted. Now I can ask ChatGPT and it will tell me the rules.

More and more of my questions are going through ChatGPT rather than search, and the set of questions for which search is better is getting smaller all the time. **In a very short while, search will be as outdated as link farms and the Yahoo directory.**

This is only possible – that is, large language models like ChatGPT only work – because publishers chose to put their content online for free without making it clear what that content could and could not be used for.

ChatGPT doesn't “know” anything. It's been trained on other people's content – both copyrighted and public domain.

## There's no stopping AI

I like ChatGPT and I use it all the time. I don't want to stop progress, even if I could. But **copyright serves an important social function that should be preserved**. It provides an incentive for people to create new things by giving them a window in which they and they alone can profit from their creation. The copyright anarchists are winning and the "information wants to be free" mindset is taking over.

It's time to pause and think this through.

## What you should do now

*The New York Times* has taken the lead in this. They have altered the "prohibited use of the services" section of their terms and conditions to include ...

... use the Content for the development of any software program, including, but not limited to, training a machine learning or artificial intelligence (AI) system.

You should do the same.

This isn't going to stop anything, but it will set the legal grounds for the copyright lawsuits that are surely coming.

## 10 Publishing Lessons from Abu Dhabi

**1. How to find content ideas.** I do a daily podcast called "Something I Learned Yesterday," so I'm always looking for new ideas, which is why I really liked Matt Bailey's presentation on tools you can use to get ideas for your market. Things like Google Trends, Answer the public, SparkToro, MarketFinder, Newzdash, and more. Keep an eye on Matt's page. He'll have a post on this topic in a couple weeks.

**2. Think outside email.** I'm not joining the "end of email" crowd, but in Abu Dhabi, nobody wants your email address. They want to connect on WhatsApp.

The point is not that WhatsApp is going to take over the email space, but that "communication of preference" is going to vary regionally, and person to person. This means you need to keep track of that personal preference with your customers – which is a fine use case for a customer data platform, by the way.

**3. Everything's going video.** There was a lot of emphasis on video, and the overall impression from the event was that if you're not focusing on video, you're going to be left behind. I have mixed feelings. I create and use video a lot myself, but I still want to listen and to read. But I admit that I'm probably in the minority on this, because when I walked around the airplane on my gruelling 14-hour flight home, nobody was reading.

**4. But what's in your videos?** You create a fantastic video, and then, as an afterthought, you say, "Oh yeah, I need a title and a description and keywords, and what happens at what time index, etc." MXTI is a product from newsbridge.io that helps solve that. I had a nice chat with Sebastien Letemple about the product. It looks good!

**5. How to measure influencers.** There's a difference between having an audience and having an influence. My friend Jason Falls gave an interesting talk on the need to **focus on influence and not influencers**. For example, one person might have a million followers,

but have no influence in your target market. Another person might have 200 followers who are exactly the people you want to reach.

**6. The future of X.** There's a lot of skepticism about and hostility towards X right now, but Marina Karam from Spica believes X is on the right track and will become dominant in that space **because they pay influencers**. That's worth thinking about.

By the way, Marina knows about this stuff because Spica helps brands monitor what people are saying about them on social media.

**7. Secure AI?** When you use a large language model, you don't know where the data came from or where it's going. Strategio helps companies solve that and build AI tools that are secure. That's worth considering.

**8. Fight disinformation by looking in the mirror.** There's an old saying that when you point, there are three fingers pointing back at you. There was a lot of talk about "disinformation" at this event. I don't mean to cast aspersions on this particular crowd, because I don't follow news in the places that were represented at this meeting. But my experience is that the people who speak the most about disinformation are the ones you need to worry about. Keep that in the back of your mind.

**9. Merging the physical and digital realms.** I wrote a speculative science fiction book on that topic a long time ago, but now it's becoming reality. That can sound scary and spooky, but it doesn't have to be. For example, you can upload your image and "try on" a suit or a pair of eye glasses. That's a nice service. I had a lovely conversation with Irina Safiullina from Phygital District about this. You should check them out.

**10. Train to retain.** My friend Monique Russell wrapped up the conference with a talk on upskilling. It's tough to attract good talent, but you can attract and retain top talent by giving them an opportunity to grow. Think of it this way. You want to be able to give a pitch like this to a prospective employee: "You should come work for my company because we have weekly 'lunch and learns' on a wide variety of topics that are designed to help you be successful – not only in your work life, but in your whole life." Of course, you have to follow that up by promoting from within!

Sincerely,



Greg Krehbiel



P.S. – If you like podcasts, remember to consider mine, "Something I Learned Yesterday."

P.P.S. – **How are you set with your corporate strategy?** Do you have a five-year plan? Do you understand the difference between strategy and planning? I recently moderated a strategic planning retreat for one of my clients. It was a lot of fun, and we all learned a lot. Call me if you need help in any of those areas.



# The **Krehbiel**Group

“The Krehbiel Group” is usually just me, Greg Krehbiel. But from time to time I engage people to help. **Here are some things I (we) can do for you.**

- Help you evaluate, onboard, or manage a **Customer Data Platform**.
- Teach your marketing and IT staff to get along and get things done!
- Review and improve your **engagement, retention, and renewal** efforts.
- Evaluate a new technology on your behalf.
- Promote your product or service in this newsletter.
- **Manage a strategic planning process** for you and your staff.
- Interview you on my podcast.
- Review your operations and increase your efficiency.
- **Optimize your e-store.**
- Evaluate your website analytics.
- **Create content marketing material** for your product or service.
- Speak at your event.
- **Manage a technical project.** (Create an app, build an API ....)
- Be a guest on your podcast.
- **Train or mentor** your junior marketing/tech staff.
- **Provide a sanity check.**

But honestly, I’ve been in publishing my whole career. **I can probably help with anything you need.** Or I can point you in the right direction. Let’s talk!