

Google to let publishers limit free website access (Update)

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Google's announcement came as the News Corp. chairman, who has threatened to block the Internet giant from indexing his newspapers, and other US media heavyweights gathered here to discuss journalism in the Internet age.

Murdoch, speaking at the two-day meeting hosted by the [Federal Trade Commission](#) (FTC), said newspapers "need to do a better job of

persuading consumers that high quality reliable news and information does not come free."

"Good journalism is an expensive commodity," said the 78-year-old Murdoch, who repeated his intention to begin charging readers of News Corp. newspapers on the Web.

Arianna Huffington, co-founder and editor-in-chief of The Huffington Post, accused Murdoch and other newspaper [publishers](#) meanwhile of being in "digital denial" and said they needed to "stop whining."

Murdoch has blasted Google and other news aggregators for "stealing" stories without sharing advertising revenue and has reportedly been holding talks with Microsoft about making News Corp.'s content accessible exclusively through the software giant's new [search engine](#), Bing.

Acknowledging that "creating high-quality content is not easy and, in many cases, expensive" Google said in a blog post it was changing its "First Click Free" program.

First Click Free directs readers from Google or Google News to a story on a newspaper's website but prevents them from having unrestricted access.

Google noted, however, that some readers were "abusing" the program by returning to Google or Google News and clicking through to other stories.

"Previously, each click from a user would be treated as free," [Google](#) senior business product manager Josh Cohen said. "Now, we've updated the program so that publishers can limit users to no more than five pages per day without registering or subscribing."

Without naming any companies, Murdoch hit out at news aggregators saying they are "feeding off the hard-earned efforts and investments of others." "To be impolite it's theft," he said.

The News Corp. chief also said "the old business model based on advertising only is dead."

"In the future, good journalism will depend on the ability of a news organization to attract readers by providing news and information they're willing to pay for," Murdoch said. "In the new business model we will be charging consumers for the news we provide on our Internet sites."

Noting that the Wall Street Journal is already charging online, he said: "We intend to expand this pay model to all our newspapers in the News Corp. stable: the Times of London, The Australian, the rest."

"Some critics say people won't pay," Murdoch said. "I believe they will."

He also warned against seeking government help for the newspaper industry, which is battling declining print advertising revenue, falling circulation and free news on the Web.

"The prospect of the US government becoming directly involved in commercial journalism ought to be chilling to anyone who cares about free speech," Murdoch said.

Huffington rejected Murdoch's criticism of news aggregators saying they actually drive traffic to newspaper websites.

"In most industries, if your customers were leaving in droves, you would try to figure out what to do to get them back," she said. "Not in the media. They'd rather accuse aggregators of stealing their content."

"It's time for traditional media companies to stop whining," she said.

Also addressing the FTC event was Steven Brill, a co-founder of Journalism Online, a company which is seeking to help news organizations make money on the Web.

Brill said market research suggests that some news sites may be able to get 10 percent or more of their readers to pay online for content of "distinctive value."

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