

US author says China media can't cover Google book

April 8 2010, By CARA ANNA , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- The author of a new book about Google will not promote it in China next month because he says the government is restricting the Chinese media's writings about the company since it moved its search engine off the mainland to avoid censorship.

The publisher of the Chinese edition and publicity agents for the tour believe Ken Auletta's book tour no longer made sense, because even if Chinese media attend, they won't be able to report anything, the author said in a phone interview late Wednesday.

"Googled: The End of the World as We Know It," by the New Yorker magazine writer was published in the U.S. last fall by Penguin Press, and state-owned China Citic Press bought the rights to translate and publish the Chinese edition.

Auletta said he didn't know whether the restrictions mean his book won't be published in China at all. A representative of the Chinese publisher wouldn't comment.

E-mails from the publisher and other contacts for the Chinese edition, seen Wednesday by The Associated Press, point out the restrictions with concern.

"It's disappointing, not to mention outrageous," Auletta said. He said he wouldn't know where to begin to appeal to the [Chinese government](#). "It sounds like a faceless decision. It doesn't sound like one person you

appeal to ... It just sounds like '1984.'"

The Chinese publisher bought the rights to Auletta's book before Google kicked off a tussle with the Chinese government in January, threatening to shut down its China-based search engine unless the Communist Party loosened its restrictions on [free speech](#).

Google then moved its search engine last month to the Chinese territory of Hong Kong, a former British colony with broader legal and political freedoms.

Since then, reporters and editors for China's state-run media have said they've been restricted in what they write about Google, being told to treat the company's move as a business dispute and to paint Google's motives as political.

"The Chinese government recently asked the media not to report anything regarding Google ... It is not likely that they can report the author's visit and the book at this sensitive time," said an e-mail Tuesday from Jian-Mei Wang with the Bardon-Chinese Media Agency to Betsy Robbins, Auletta's agent outside the United States.

Another e-mail Tuesday to Robbins from Li Yinghong with China Citic Press said, "We heard from local media who had interest in interviewing the author the local authorities don't like any news and reports about Google at such time due to the company's decision of exit of Chinese market."

Li, reached by phone Wednesday night, said he couldn't comment.

A man answering phones for the propaganda department of the Communist Party late Wednesday said his office didn't know about any [media](#) restrictions on covering Google. He didn't give his name, as is

common with Chinese officials.

The book includes an account of Google agreeing to censor its search results in China, and how uncomfortable co-founder Sergey Brin was with the decision. The book describes a 2008 meeting where a shareholder proposed that [Google](#) abandon China unless it stopped censoring the [search engine](#). The move almost passed but for one abstention, from Brin himself.

Auletta said there had been no mention of cutting such details out of the book's Chinese edition. "This is the first inkling I've gotten of any problem with the book in China," he said.

Auletta already had his visa for what will be his first trip to [China](#) and still plans to visit Shanghai for other reasons in May, he said.

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