

Newspaper, Internet titans duel at Web 2.0 Summit

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Thomson's unabashed criticism of the Internet powerhouse came as he and Google vice president of search products Marissa Mayer took part in a Web 2.0 panel focused on the fate of journalism in a world of online [news aggregation](#).

"Marissa unintentionally encourages promiscuity," Thomson said as discussion touched on whether Google providing links to news stories in response to search queries was bolstering or undermining traditional news operations.

"The whole model is about digital disloyalty. If people type 'Hamid Karzai' in a search, there is no intention on that results page to drive traffic (to news websites)."

Mayer counter that it is Google's intent to guide people hunting for stories to news websites that can then cash-in with advertising.

"Journalism is going through a transition right

now," Mayer said. "There are a lot of things we do to help publishers."

Google pays publishers more than five billion dollars a year, and delivers "lots of traffic which is ideally monetized," Mayer said.

She noted that if news operations do not want their content to be found, there are tools to prevent links to stories from winding up in the Internet giant's indexes.

"I don't understand how you could not like Google," said Eric Hippeau, chief executive at popular online news website The Huffington Post.

"Online publications have large online circulations, courtesy of Google."

The notion that newspapers are going to be vanquished by the Internet is "a cliché," argued panel member Martin Nisenholtz, senior vice president of digital operations at The New York Times.

New York Times circulation has been stable for the last couple of years, he said.

"The Web giveth and the Web taketh away," Nisenholtz said, maintaining it is a time of opportunity for news organizations.

"To put your hands up and say 'Stop' means you will be rolled over by the Internet. You have to innovate your way through it."

Thomson pressed a distinction between those that research and report stories presented online and those, like Google, that aggregate the work of others.

"Right now, the most burden falls on the originators," Thomson said, referring to costs such as having foreign correspondents reporting from

hostile areas.

"Google and Huffington Post are clever at what they do, but they are reverberation; they are not creation."

Hippeau said that the Huffington Post has a staff of about 60 [editors](#), all of them journalists, and that they tell current event stories using digital tools along with creating original content.

"I'm not cool with theft of copyright," Nisenholtz said. "I think the Huffington Post is guilty of that on multiple occasions. I am cool with [Google](#) indexing us and sending us traffic."

Mayer sees direct payment models for online news "in the near future."

"There is a willingness to pay for quality journalism," Mayer said. "We need to build the right tools online. News is already engaging in print format, you can make it better with the [Internet](#)."

Hippeau predicted that increasing numbers of people will want online news, creating new options for journalists.

"We are in a golden age of journalism and people engaging with public events," Hippeau said. "We should be celebrating this."

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