

Google opens window into secretive data centers

October 17 2012, by Michael Liedtke



CORRECTS LOCATION- This undated photo provided by Google shows a Google data center in Douglas County, Ga. Google is opening a virtual window into the secretive data centers that serve as its nerve center. The unprecedented peek is being provided through a new website unveiled Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012. The site features photos from inside some of the eight data centers that Google Inc. already has running in the U.S., Finland and Belgium. (AP Photo/Google)

Google is opening a virtual window into the secretive data centers where

an intricate maze of computers process Internet search requests, show YouTube video clips and distribute email for millions of people.

The unprecedented peek is being provided through a new website unveiled Wednesday at www.google.com/about/datacenters/gallery/#/. The site features photos from inside some of the eight data centers that [Google Inc.](#) already has running in the U.S., Finland and Belgium. Google is also building data centers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Chile.

Virtual tours of a North Carolina data center also will be available through Google's "[Street View](#)" service, which is usually used to view photos of neighborhoods around the world.

The photographic access to Google's data centers coincides with the publication of a Wired magazine article about how the company builds and operates them. The article is written by Steven Levy, a journalist who won Google's trust while writing "In The Plex," a book published last year about the company's philosophy and evolution.



This undated photo provided by Google shows a Google technician working on some of the computers in the Dalles, Ore., data center. Google is opening a virtual window into the secretive data centers that serve as its nerve center. The unprecedented peek is being provided through a new website unveiled Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012. The site features photos from inside some of the eight data centers that Google Inc. already has running in the U.S., Finland and Belgium. (AP Photo/Google)

The data centers represent Google's nerve center, although none are located near the company's headquarters in Mountain View, California.

As Google blossomed from its roots in a [Silicon Valley](#) garage, company co-founders [Larry Page](#) and [Sergey Brin](#) worked with other engineers to develop a system to connect low-cost [computer servers](#) in a way that would help them realize their ambition to provide a digital roadmap to all of the world's information.



This undated photo provided by Google shows a Google data center in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Google is opening a virtual window into the secretive data centers that serve as its nerve center. The unprecedented peek is being provided through a new website unveiled Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012. The site features photos from inside some of the eight data centers that Google Inc. already has running in the U.S., Finland and Belgium. (AP Photo/Google)

Initially, Google just wanted enough computing power to index all the websites on the Internet and deliver quick responses to search requests. As Google's tentacles extended into other markets, the company had to keep adding more computers to store videos, photos, email and information about their users' preferences.

The insights that Google gathers about the more than 1 billion people that use its services has made the company a frequent target of [privacy complaints](#) around the world. The latest missive came Tuesday in

Europe, where regulators told Google to revise a 7-month-old change to its privacy policy that enables the company to combine user data collected from its different services.



This undated photo provided by Google shows a Google data center in Hamina, Finland. Google is opening a virtual window into the secretive data centers that serve as its nerve center. The unprecedented peek is being provided through a new website unveiled Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012. The site features photos from inside some of the eight data centers that Google Inc. already has running in the U.S., Finland and Belgium. (AP Photo/Google)

Google studies Internet [search requests](#) and Web surfing habits in an effort to gain a better understanding of what people like. The company does this in an effort to show ads of products and services to the people most likely to be interested in buying them. Advertising accounts for virtually all of Google's revenue, which totaled nearly \$23 billion

through the first half of this year.

Even as it allows anyone with a Web browser to peer into its data centers, Google intends to closely guard physical access to its buildings. The company also remains cagey about how many computers are in its data centers, saying only that they house hundreds of thousands of machines to run Google's services.

Google's need for so many computers has turned the company a major electricity user, although management says it's constantly looking for ways to reduce power consumption to protect the environment and lower its expenses.

The company's data centers are located in: Berkeley County, South Carolina; Council Bluffs, Iowa; Douglas County, Georgia; Mayes County, Oklahoma; Lenoir, North Carolina; The Dalles, Oregon; Hamina, Finland; and St. Ghislain, Belgium. Other data centers are being built in Quilicura, Chile; Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan.

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