

NOTEWORTHY

DATA VOIDS AND SEARCH ENGINES

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An interesting [Nature editorial](#) reporting [a recent study](#)

A study in Nature last month highlights a previously underappreciated aspect of this phenomenon: the existence of data voids, information spaces that lack evidence, into which people searching to check the accuracy of controversial topics can easily fall...

Clearly, copying terms from inaccurate news stories into a search engine reinforces misinformation, making it a poor method for verifying accuracy... Google does not manually remove content, or de-rank a search result; nor does it moderate or edit content, in the way that social-media sites and publishers do.

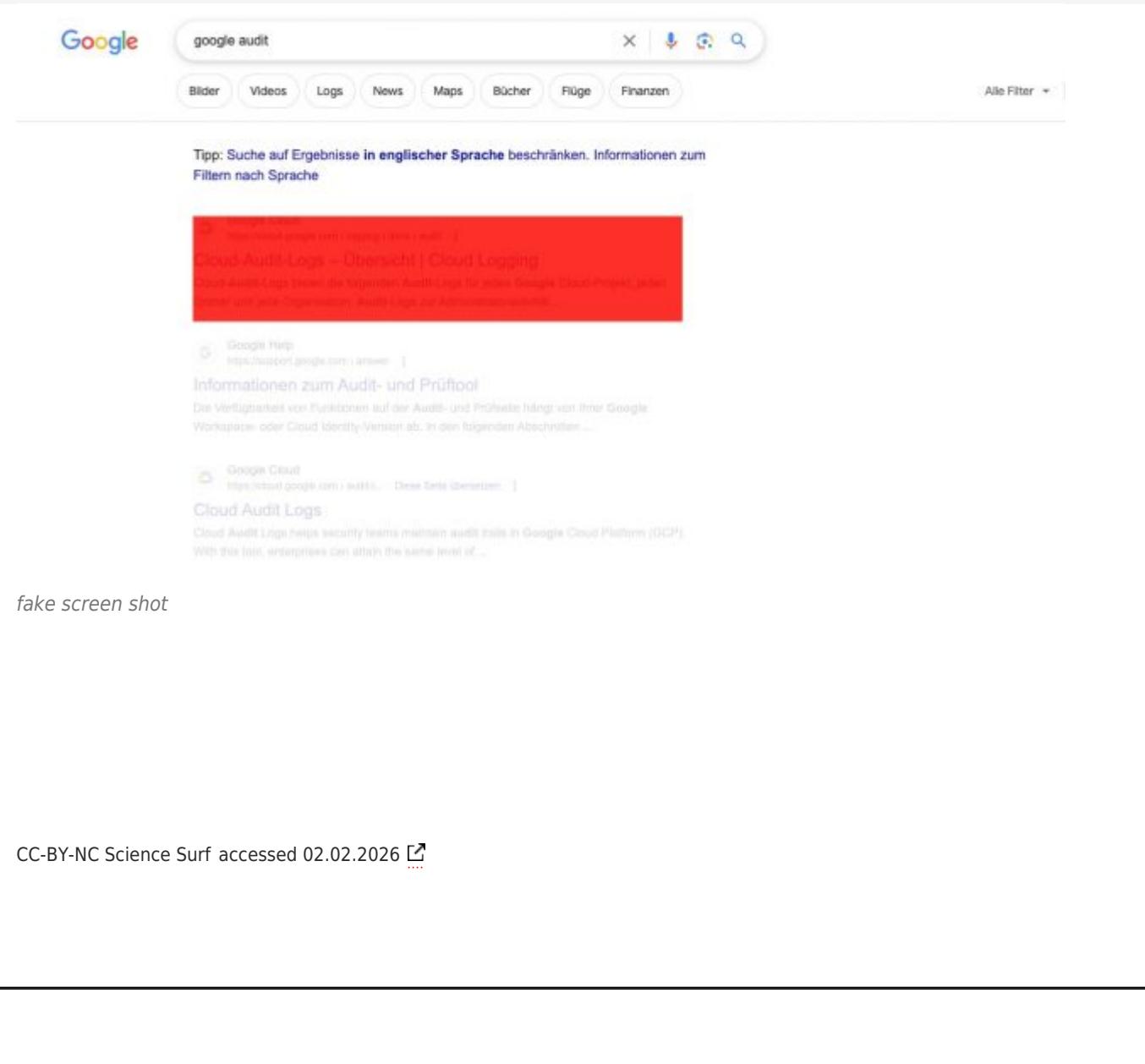
So what could be done?

There's also a body of literature on improving media literacy — including suggestions on more, or better education on discriminating between different sources in search results.

Sure increasing media literacy at the consumer site would be helpful. But letting Google earn all that money without any further curation efforts? The original study found

Here, across five experiments, we present consistent evidence that online search to evaluate the truthfulness of false news articles actually increases the probability of believing them.

So why not putting out red flags? Or de-rank search results?



A fake screenshot of a Google search result for the query "google audit". The search bar at the top shows the query "google audit". Below the search bar is a navigation bar with links for Bilder, Videos, Logs, News, Maps, Bücher, Flüge, and Finanzen. To the right of the navigation bar is a "Alle Filter" dropdown. The main content area displays a search result for "Cloud Audit-Logs – Übersicht | Cloud Logging". The result includes a snippet of text: "Cloud Audit-Logs zeigen die relevanten Audit-Logs für jedes Google Cloud-Project, jeder Benutzer und jede Organisation. Richte Logs zur Fehlerbehandlung ein." Below this, there are two more snippets: one for "Google Help" and one for "Cloud Audit-Logs". The "fake screen shot" text is located at the bottom left of the image.

fake screen shot

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