

# Unpublishing



— Unpublishing —  
— in the Digital Era —

as a man who has just opened his mouth;  
I leave behind it I speak with someone  
because every word spoken is a word  
that remains and can crop up again later,  
with questions, directly or without.

NADINE ROTEM-STIBBE

# Data, Information and the Absurdity of Unpublishing

To Unpublish - and to be unpublishable - does not  
recognise it. It is a concept that has been used on  
platforms but has not already been published in  
dictionaries. Or has it? It is a concept that has  
the following definition:

After an article in *The Economist* was published in  
the column, but the article was not in the  
to find a dictionary online, computing of all that  
forgets.

At the time of writing this the year was 1997 and the  
www.internett.com site, but the site was not  
to the internet. This means that the site was  
faster by the day. Publishing is often  
a way to express ourselves. However, we  
leave a trail of digital content, that  
the network. We have tracked both  
we have told the world about ourselves, but  
unpublish is to try to make explicit. We  
specific content from the internet, but  
about us. The dictionary example is a  
than done.

The use of the verb *To Unpublish* was only  
internet, mostly for content management  
software commands lines, such as  
been removed from circulation for  
out of print, works put on a  
libraries, the destruction of the  
the Nazi

book burning. One early form of censorship worth mentioning is *The Index Librorum Prohibitorium* or List of Prohibited Books (fig. 1). This was a practice in the Roman Catholic church of censoring via a list of books to be banned. The first edition was published in 1559, with 19 other versions published throughout the centuries, and the final version published in 1948, only to be suppressed in 1966. The list included texts that were believed to threaten the morals and faith of the Christian doctrine, notably Galileo's writings were treated as foolish and absurd which lead the Inquisition to be put him under house arrest for the rest of his life. However, as the nature of publishing changed with the popularity of the Gutenberg printing press in the 15th century, books that were rare or deemed unholy, became much harder to control as they could be mass-produced. Putting the author under house arrest wouldn't help to stop the text from spreading. In the 21st century, the authorities of the digital networks are still doing their best to censor what seems to be unholy in their terms, but controlling the flow is becoming ever harder.



Fig. 1 - Index Librorum Prohibitorium (1559)

Facebook seem to work really hard at unpublishing any kind of sexual content, alongside actual disturbing content such as child pornography, which seems to be put at the front of every argument, perhaps in an attempt to seem more morally secure. So much effort and secrecy goes into it, that content moderators have to hide out, or sometimes don't even know for which company they are working for, in order to remove content from a set of rigid guidelines. These guidelines are a reminder of the Roman Catholic Church's list of banned books (mentioned in chapter 1), where the authorities decide on the morals, and anything contrary to chastity be it pornography, masturbation or homosexual practices, is a sin and should be banned from public knowledge.

Eva and Franco Mattes, an Italian artist duo, investigated internet content moderators, resulting in an installation using the leaked moderation guidelines and a series of videos interviewing one hundred moderators with 3D avatars and computer generated voices to keep anonymity. They explain that:

Contrary to popular belief, the removal of offensive material from the Internet is not carried out by sophisticated algorithms. It is the nerve-wracking, demanding job of thousands of anonymous human beings: people disguised as algorithms. (Mattes, 2015)

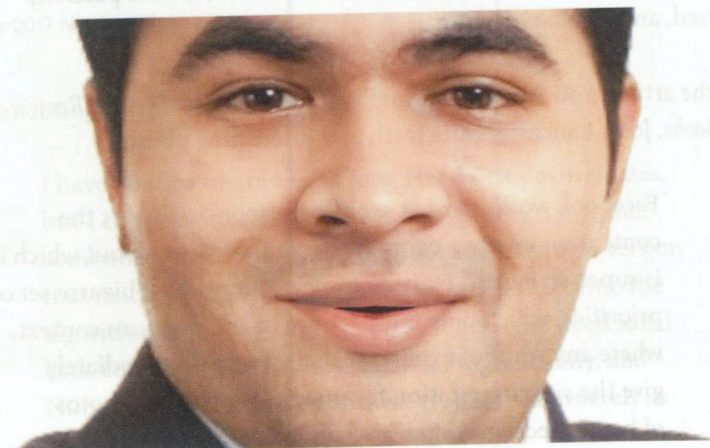


Fig. 12 - Dark Content, Episode 3



Fig. 13 - Dark Content, Episode 2

There has been a reversal of roles it seems, between human and automated jobs. Comparing the ease of publishing to the human labour put into unpublishing, is something that would have been unimaginable a few decades back. There are, however, automation tools being developed in order to control and moderate images before publication, one example is the PhotoDNA program, developed by Microsoft. The software uses hash-based technologies to identify and remove existing illegal images online. It is done by converting these images into a grayscale format, overlaying them onto a grid and assigning each square a numerical value. The designation of a numerical value converts the square into a hash, or a digital signature, which remains tied to the image and can be used to identify other reproductions of the image online. The technology seems to be very efficient against the propagation of an already recognised image, but there will still be many new images

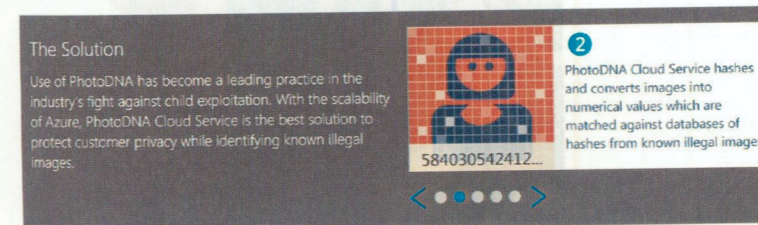


Fig. 16 - PhotoDNA

Newsman, I do not know what happened  
https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2017/05/11/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos/2017/05/11/  
Epstein, Jeffrey (1951-2019) - New York Times  
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/07/us/politics/jeffrey-epstein-photos.html  
obituary  
Beaulieu, Robert (1951-2019) - The Guardian  
Gibson, Jamie (1951-2019) - The Guardian  
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos  
be-forgotten-claimant-wants-new-look-at-her-people

All links checked on 07/11/2019

# Illustrations

Epstein, Jeffrey (1951-2019) - New York Times  
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/07/us/politics/jeffrey-epstein-photos.html  
obituary

Beaulieu, Robert (1951-2019) - The Guardian  
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos  
be-forgotten-claimant-wants-new-look-at-her-people

Gibson, Jamie (1951-2019) - The Guardian  
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos  
be-forgotten-claimant-wants-new-look-at-her-people

Newsman, I do not know what happened  
https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2017/05/11/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos/2017/05/11/

Epstein, Jeffrey (1951-2019) - New York Times  
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/07/us/politics/jeffrey-epstein-photos.html  
obituary

Beaulieu, Robert (1951-2019) - The Guardian  
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos  
be-forgotten-claimant-wants-new-look-at-her-people

Gibson, Jamie (1951-2019) - The Guardian  
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos  
be-forgotten-claimant-wants-new-look-at-her-people

Newsman, I do not know what happened  
https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2017/05/11/jeffrey-epstein-photos-photos/2017/05/11/

Fig 1. Index Librorum Prohibitorum (1559)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index\\_Librorum\\_Prohibitorum#/media/File:Index\\_Librorum\\_Prohibitorum\\_1.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_Librorum_Prohibitorum#/media/File:Index_Librorum_Prohibitorum_1.jpg)

Fig 2. Thorne, David (2008) *Overdue Account*  
<http://www.27bslash6.com/overdue.html>  
(Screenshot from 20.03.2018)

Fig 3. Deactivating or Deleting your Account  
[https://www.facebook.com/help/250563911970368?helpref=hc\\_global\\_nav](https://www.facebook.com/help/250563911970368?helpref=hc_global_nav)  
(Screenshot from 20.03.2018)

Fig 4. and 5. Google Terms of Service  
<https://policies.google.com/terms>  
(Screenshot from 04.04.2018)

Fig 6. GitHub Help  
<https://help.github.com/articles/removing-sensitive-data-from-a-repository/>  
(Screenshot from 20.03.2018)

Fig 7. Do It Now Foundation (year unknown) *Safe Sex? Save Sex*  
<https://aep.lib.rochester.edu/node/45599>  
(Screenshot from 27.03.2018)

Fig 8. MediaWiki Database Schema (Last edit: 02.03.2018)  
[https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/File:MediaWiki\\_database\\_schema\\_latest.svg](https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/File:MediaWiki_database_schema_latest.svg)

Fig 9. MediaWiki Manual: Preventing Access (Last edit: 04.03.2018)  
[https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Manual:Preventing\\_access#Restrict\\_viewing\\_of\\_certain%20specific\\_pages](https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Manual:Preventing_access#Restrict_viewing_of_certain%20specific_pages)

Fig 10. The Finger Family Song by ChuChu TV Nursery Rhymes & Songs For Children (Published: March 2015)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=86&v=3xqj907TgA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=86&v=3xqj907TgA)  
(Screenshot from 24.03.2018)





