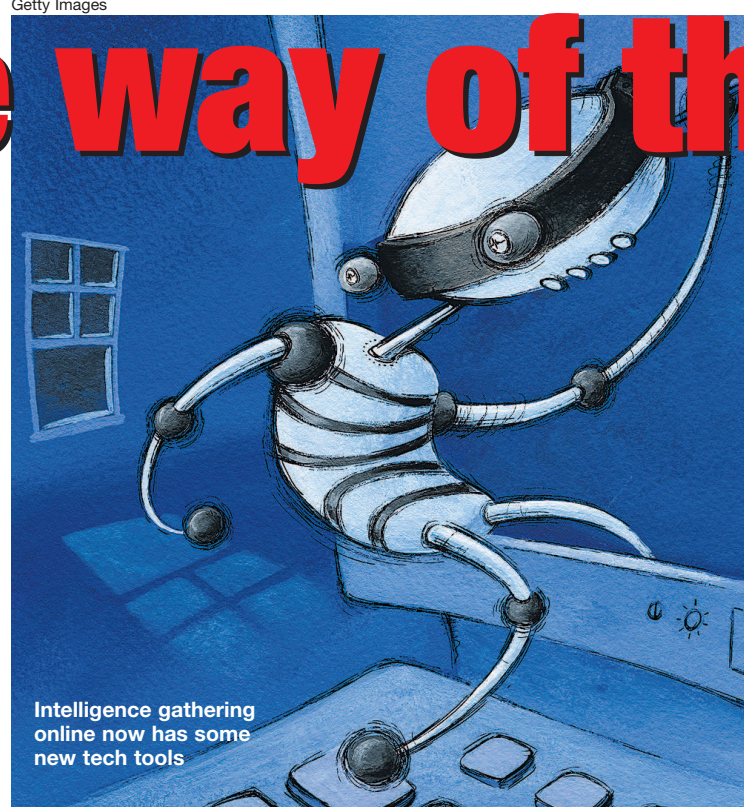


Getty Images



Intelligence gathering online now has some new tech tools

their curiosity about technology and their curiosity about culture. SPH:NX is based on NATO's new method of Open Source Intelligence, and search engines that are not anonymous 'web crawlers', but 'AI researchers' who are coded through semiotics, discourse analysis and cultural theory. In other words, Google crawls the web objectively, whereas other sides, like SPH:NX (run by a secret cabal

headed by one who half-seriously calls himself 'kaiser soze') does so using existing research disciplines. Consumers are generating magnitudes of data today, and this is being recorded on the infinite archive of the Internet.

To take a very simple example: Roman Polanski. Why were people in Mahape, Navi Mumbai so curious about him? And why is their curiosity in 2009 been only about his case, and not about his film? Further investigation reveals that Mahape is quite curious about sex — sex changes (2008), sex violence (2008), same sex marriage ban (2009). Girls who had sex in eleventh grade (2009) — and these are just the news stories. If we layer this with nor-

# The way of the future

Tech guru and market research expert **Angad Chowdhry** gives you a glimpse of what the future of online information gathering looks like

## STEVE "Woz"

Wozniak, the man who founded a popular computer brand and created the personal computer revolution of the 70s, was the keynote speaker at a conference called "Hackers on Planet Earth (HOPE)" in 2004. In his three-hour conversation, addressed to pranksters, security geeks, innovators and social engineers he said something quite remarkable. Hackers, he said, prove to the world that you do not need money for creation. Just curiosity and (sometimes) a bit of technology. In a world where the word 'hacker' conjures up images of empty bank accounts and stolen military secrets, we must not forget that the 'hacker' is curious, playful and inventive. In the market research business, curiosity is key. Industries want to find out how many people are doing X, and why they are doing so.

Technology usually plays the role of a facilitator. Large scale computations, statistical analysis, digital video and audio recorders, email and the telephone help agencies run their business. The curiosity of the client is satisfied by the research agency who talk to 'real people'. Technology is just a 'thing' that helps them organize, record or communicate internally. SPH:NX was created when a bunch of 'hackers' decided to marry

mal searches, we get 'Indian Sex', 'Indian Sex Stories', as the bulk winners. There are also 'sexy aunties', 'sex wall-papers' and 'tamil sex stories'. So, what is going on in Mahape? Does it have to do with the government IT park and IT vendors who have set up shop there, and given large scale Internet access to fresh graduates working in BPOs? That's when you notice that Mahape Internet users are obsessed with 'BPO sex' and 'call centre sex' searches as well. A quick scan through matrimonial data bases reveals that girls working in Mahape looking for husbands are all in the same industry. In their public profiles, Mahape IT wokers are either looking for love, listening to love songs, or (in the event

that all attempts have failed) 'loving their pets'. From here, sites like these can tell you their psychological profiles, using words pattern analysis, their favourite photographs and their aesthetics of self expression, their attitudes towards mobile phones and communications, their existing courtship rituals and places, language games, the types of porn torrents being distributed, the romance books being sold, the clothes, songs, chocolates and flowers that are trending. And, unlike 'non-technological' research, we don't even need to ask them. This website captures culture as it happens. What's cutting edge today might become de rigueur tomorrow. But remember: this is where you first read it!

**'Industries want to find out how many people are doing 'X', and why they are doing so'**



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