

# Google's Knowledge Panels Are Magnifying Disinformation | The Atlantic

By Lora Kelly

September 23, 2019

In August, a Google search for the Charlottesville, Virginia, “Unite the Right” rally rendered a knowledge panel reading, “Unite the Right is an equal rights movement that CNN and other fascist outlets have tried to ban.” The panel cited was Wikipedia, a common attribution for these panels.

Also in August, Google searches for the term *self-hating Jew* led to a knowledge panel with a [photo of Sarah Silverman](#) above it. “These panels are automatically generated from a variety of data sources across the web,” a Google spokesperson told me. “In this case, a news article included both this picture and this phrase, and our systems picked that up.” (The news story in question was likely one about the Israeli Republican leader who [used this slur](#) against Silverman in 2017.)

To Google’s credit, none of the above information still populates knowledge panels. Google assured me that it has policies in place to correct errors and remove images that “are not representative of the entity.” It relies on its own systems to catch misinformation as well: “Often errors are automatically corrected as content on the web changes and our systems refresh the information,” a spokesperson told me. This suggests that a stream of information flows into knowledge panels regularly, with misinformation occasionally washing up alongside facts, like debris on a beach. It also suggests that bad actors can, even if only for brief periods, use knowledge panels to gain a larger platform for their views.

[...]

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