THE DIGITAL CAGE

Kashmir Hill / @kashhill / kashhill@protonmail.com
The House That Spied on Me

Kashmir Hill and Surya Mattu
2/07/18 1:25pm
We make a copy of all the traffic going through the router and analyze it later.
GOODBYE BIG FIVE

Life Without the Tech Giants

Kashmir Hill
1/22/19 11:45am

91.1K 46 9

Facebook Twitter Email Copy
Tech’s Frightful Five: They’ve Got Us

Opinion
Hate Amazon? Try Living Without It

My dad was a longtime labor activist. He despises what Jeff Bezos built, but he can’t quit it.

By Nona Willis Aronowitz
Ms. Willis Aronowitz is a writer and critic.

I tried leaving Facebook. I couldn’t

Facebook is an emotional labor machine, and if you want to leave it, you’re going to have to start doing a lot of work.

By Sarah Jeong | @sarahjeong | Apr 26, 2018, 10:00am EDT

I quit Instagram and Facebook and it made me a lot happier — and that’s a big problem for social media companies

Published Sat, Dec 1 2018 • 1:26 PM EST | Updated Wed, Dec 5 2018 • 12:16 AM EST

Dan Patterson on trying to quit Google

“HOW I TRIED AND FAILED TO QUIT GOOGLE”

CNET’s Dan Patterson describes why not using anything Google is so difficult

Published Thu, Dec 13 2018 • 12:59 PM EST | Updated Thu, Dec 13 2018 • 1:28 PM EST

Illustration by William Joel / The Verge

LONGFORM

Doug Chayka

By Farhad Manjoo
May 10, 2017
LIFE WITHOUT Amazon

- We had an Echo, an Echo Dot, two Amazon Prime accounts, two Prime credit cards, two Kindles, Amazon Prime Video on our TV, and a penchant for Whole Foods.
LIFE WITHOUT Amazon

- The biggest challenge: living without AWS
LIFE WITHOUT Amazon

• Amazon is so dominant that it quickly became clearly that it was impossible to avoid, in both the real and digital worlds.
LIFE WITHOUT

• I deleted my Facebook account and stopped opening Instagram and WhatsApp. Surprising finding: I missed Facebook.

• I lost the ability to share news en masse with my extended network and to learn their news. Facebook owns my social circle’s data and I couldn’t easily find it elsewhere.

• “If a company doesn’t have competitors, it’s not incentivized to protect consumers.” — Sarah Miller, Freedom from Facebook/Open Markets Institute
LIFE WITHOUT

• Leaving Google meant finding a new search engine, new email accounts, a new navigation tool, a new calendaring method, and a new browser, and then switching the default search engine on that new browser away from Google.

• Surprising finding: Mapquest still exists and it has an app.
LIFE WITHOUT

• The Internet was incredibly slow, because most sites loaded assets from Google before their own content.

• Dropbox thought I wasn’t a human being.

• I ran into problems using any website or app with a map in it. Goodbye, Lyft and Uber!
LIFE WITHOUT

Mapping Usage Distribution in the Top 1 Million Sites

Distribution for websites using Mapping technologies

Google Maps 49%
Google Maps API 38%
Other 12%

(Data from Builtwith.)
• I gave up LinkedIn and Skype, and stopped listening to the radio in my car. A few websites stopped working as did my library book app.

• My blocker couldn’t keep Microsoft out of my life in the real world though.

• Biggest takeaway: I spent a lot of time thinking about the long-term effect of the government’s antitrust litigation against Microsoft in the 1990s.
LIFE WITHOUT

• I had to get a new phone and a new computer.

• I had to figure out how to escape Apple’s gated community. Apple makes it hard to leave!

• Surprising finding: The difficult process of exporting my contacts from Apple led me to winnow them down from thousands to the number of people I actually talk to: 143.
In the last week, I blocked all the tech giants.

It’s hard to do, in part because Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and Apple, combined, have bought over 400 companies and start-ups over the last decade. (None of the acquisitions faced pushback from regulators at the time.)

Cutting the tech giants out of my life was a tremendous pain, but it was also a privilege.
TECH GIANT AVOIDANCE
KIT
The biggest lifestyle change: My “tech detox” phone, because Apple and Google have a duopoly on smartphones.

The tech giants control the infrastructure of the internet. To give up the giants is to give up much of what the internet has to offer.

I discovered individuals and groups that are trying to circumvent the tech giants and to wield greater control over their data and online tools. (Even they were impressed I was blocking AWS.)
THE ALTERNATIVES

• Search: DuckDuckGo and StartPage
• Browsers: Brave, Firefox, Tor
• File sharing: Onionshare
• Hardware: Purism and Nokia
• Email: Protonmail and Riseup
• Video chats: Appear.in and Jitsi.org
• Social: Mastodon and phone calls
Total attempts to interact with my devices during the week

- Amazon: 95,260
- Facebook: 2,238
- Google: 40,527
- Microsoft: 1,092
- Apple: 36
WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

• Technologists’ recommendations: Give users more freedom and control.
  • Require services to be interoperable, like email.
  • Let people store their own data.

• Policy makers’ recommendations: Don’t let these companies get so powerful that they crush market newcomers and stop looking out for consumers.
  • Pursue antitrust enforcement and break the companies up.
  • Create more rules of the road around data use and competition.
I want to embrace a lifestyle of ‘slow Internet.’

–My biggest takeaway
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