



GOOGLE TAKEOUT



I discovered Google Takeout accidentally. I don't recall how exactly, but when I first found it, I wasn't sure what it was that I was expecting. In my head, I was imagining getting a literal takeout box in a smiley thank you bag from their Chelsea office down a couple of blocks from where I live.

As I was entertaining that thought, I got an email notification that my takeout download was ready. I immediately unzipped the file. On my screen were dozens of folders labeled with different Google products. When I opened them, I was presented with a bunch of json files holding thousands of my search queries, voice commands, emails, and more.

Before I began delving into the data, I decided to do a little research to answer the question that immediately came to mind: why did this service exist?

Google Takeout is a project released in 2011 by the Google Data Liberation Front. The Google Data Liberation Front is a team at Google whose goal was to make it easier for people to take their data out of different Google products.

The minute-ish long video ends with their tagline – “we’re the Data Liberation Front and we are here to liberate your data.” The idea is that they want to give people a choice when it comes to the technology they choose to use. Google is willingly helping you move onto other services by giving back your Google data in a neat little takeout package. They claim transparency is the key to people’s hearts. But when did I ever ask to have my data to be kept captive? What purpose (if any) did my data serve for them when it was locked up in one of their servers? And most importantly, what was I supposed to do with all of this data?

To answer the last question, I started parsing through the different json files. I felt nostalgic when I first started parsing through the data. It was like finding a yearbook that you hadn’t opened in a while. I vividly remembered some of the queries I had

made, the emails I had written, and the commands that I had given. Then there were those that made me feel embarrassed for myself for searching weird shit online and asking my Google home mini device useless questions.

It was when I saw the year 2012 in one of the datasets that I began to realize how much information Google had of me. Almost a decade worth of data (and there were a lot missing... did they intentionally give me partial access to my data or is it just the way they track and store data?) and I didn’t know what to do with it, let alone process what that meant. I decided to take some of the data and visualize them in ways that felt more personal to me. I wanted a keepsake, an artifact that will remind me of how different aspects of my ordinary life are being tracked and stored to serve this extraordinary surveillance apparatus.

Thank you, Google

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, connect to Bluetooth

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Nevermind

Hey Google, can you look up if there are still protests going on right now?

Hey Google, what's the current temperature?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, stop the timer

Hey Google, set a timer for 5 minutes

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what's the weather like tomorrow?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, pause

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what's the weather like today?

Hey Google, stop the timer.

Hey Google, set a timer for 48 minutes

Hey Google, stop the timer

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, how much time is left on the timer?

Hey Google, can you wake me up at 9?

Hey Google, how much time is left on the timer?

Hey Google, what's the weather like today?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, good morning

Hey Google, can you do my python homework for me?

Hey Google, why is psychic image stupid?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, turn off the alarm

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, wake me up at 9

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, play music by the Weeknd

Hey Google, play the Weeknd

Hey Google, is the setup complete?

Hey Google, Wi-Fi

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, how do you spell Mississippi?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, stop the news

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, good morning

Hey Google, stop the news

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, set a timer for 40 minutes

Hey Google, skip

Hey Google, play the news

Hey Google, good morning

Hey Google, check Bluetooth pairing

Hey

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, stop the news

Hey Google, play the news

Hey Google, good morning

Hey Google, stop the news

Hey Google, what's the weather like tomorrow?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, stop the news

Hey Google, play the news

Hey Google, what's the weather like today?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, stop the timer

Hey Google, can you play CNN

Hey Google, play music

Hey Google, stop the timer

Hey Google, set a timer for 50 minutes

Hey Google, set a timer for 12 minutes

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, stop the music

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, play the next song

Hey Google, what's the traffic like?

Hey Google, how do you say "you're stupid Minho" in Japanese?

Hey Google, what's the weather like right now?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, okay Google.

Hey Google, what time is it in Sweden?

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, what's the weather like?

Hey Google, what is there to see in Paris?

Hey Google, how do you say "hi Dad" in Japanese?

Hey Google, can I change you to a guy's voice?

Hey Google, how do you say "hi" in Japanese?

Hey Google, play music

Hey Google, is it working?

Hey Google, stop playing music

Hey Google, play Breathing by Ariana Grande on Spotify

Hey Google, next song

Hey Google, play Sweetener by Ariana Grande on Spotify

Hey Google, play the Beatles on Spotify

Hey Google, stop

Hey Google, play Stranger Things on Netflix

Hey Google, stop the music

Hey Google, change

Hey Google, how's the weather like today?

Hey Google, stop playing music

Hey Google, pause the music

Hey Google, play the previous song

Hey Google, play Kendrick Lamar on Spotify

Hey Google, play Lovers by Anna of the North on Spotify

Hey Google, play a Rose in Harlem on Spotify

Hey Google, set an alarm for 8:30 am for tomorrow

Hey Google, what time is it right now?

Hey Google, wake me up at 9:00 am tomorrow

Hey Google, play the next song on Spotify

Hey Google, shuffle songs on Spotify

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, play Let Me Down by Jorja Smith on Spotify

Hey Google, play Shadows by Chromatics on Spotify

Hey Google, what's the traffic like right now?

Hey Google, say "this is great" in Korean

Hey Google, say "delicious" in Japanese

Hey Google, next song

Hey Google, what's the weather like in Seoul?

Hey Google, tell me a story

Hey Google, is it going to rain today?

Hey Google, play Side Effects by Chainsmokers on Spotify

Hey Google, what's the traffic like in Seoul?

Hey Google, why is the sky blue?

Hey Google, play Flame by Tinashe on Spotify

Hey Google, say "this tastes delicious" in Korean

Hey Google, play September on Spotify.

I never thought that I would find a folder full of mp3 files of my own voice talking to my Google Home Mini device. I can't stand listening to my own voice so I only got through 2 - 3 recordings before I hit stop. Is any of this indicative of the kind of person I am? Why do I sound so demanding? Why did I ask for the time so often when I could just look at my phone? Was any of this necessary? Can I truly complain about tech companies when I myself am so eager in helping to create my data exhaust?

Hey Google, stop

Hey Google, what time is it?

Hey Google, say something

Hey Google, what's 1,681 times 0.4?

Hey Google, what's the weather like today?

Hey Google, how much time is left on the timer?

Hey Google, set a timer for 20 minutes

Hey Google, how often should I water succulents?

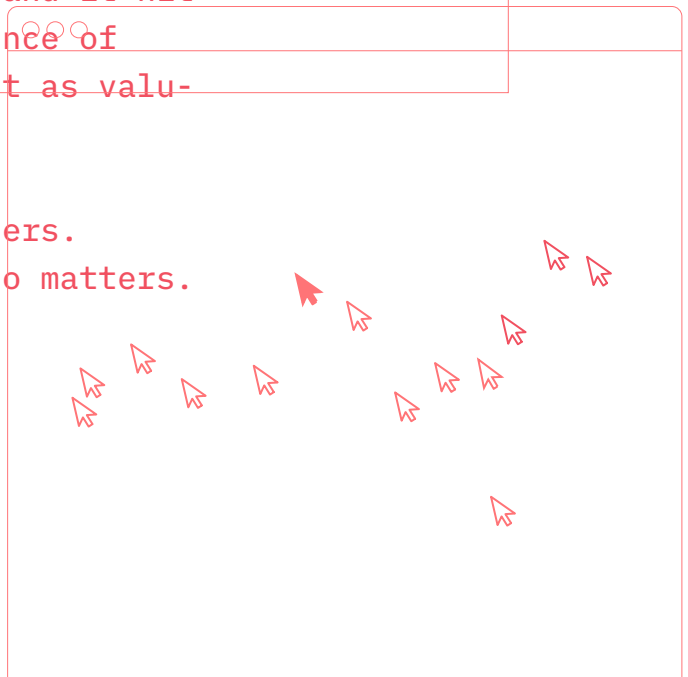
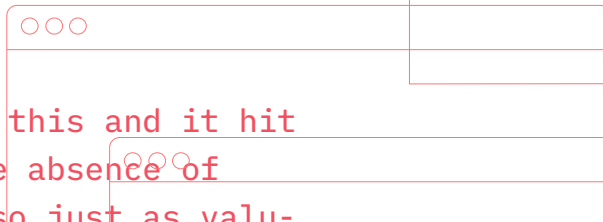
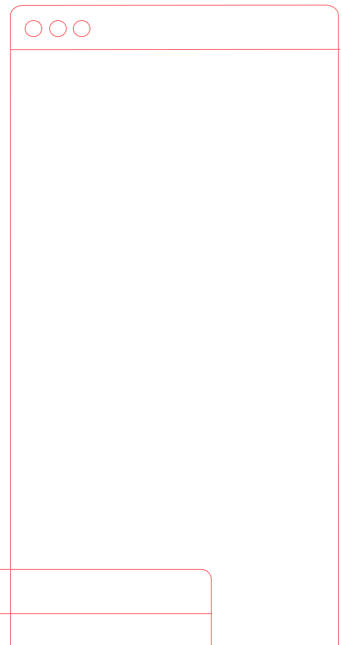
Hey Google, what's happening today?

I can't count the number of ads I get in my inbox a day. And that's not counting the promotional ads at the top that they show you hoping you will click on at least one of them.

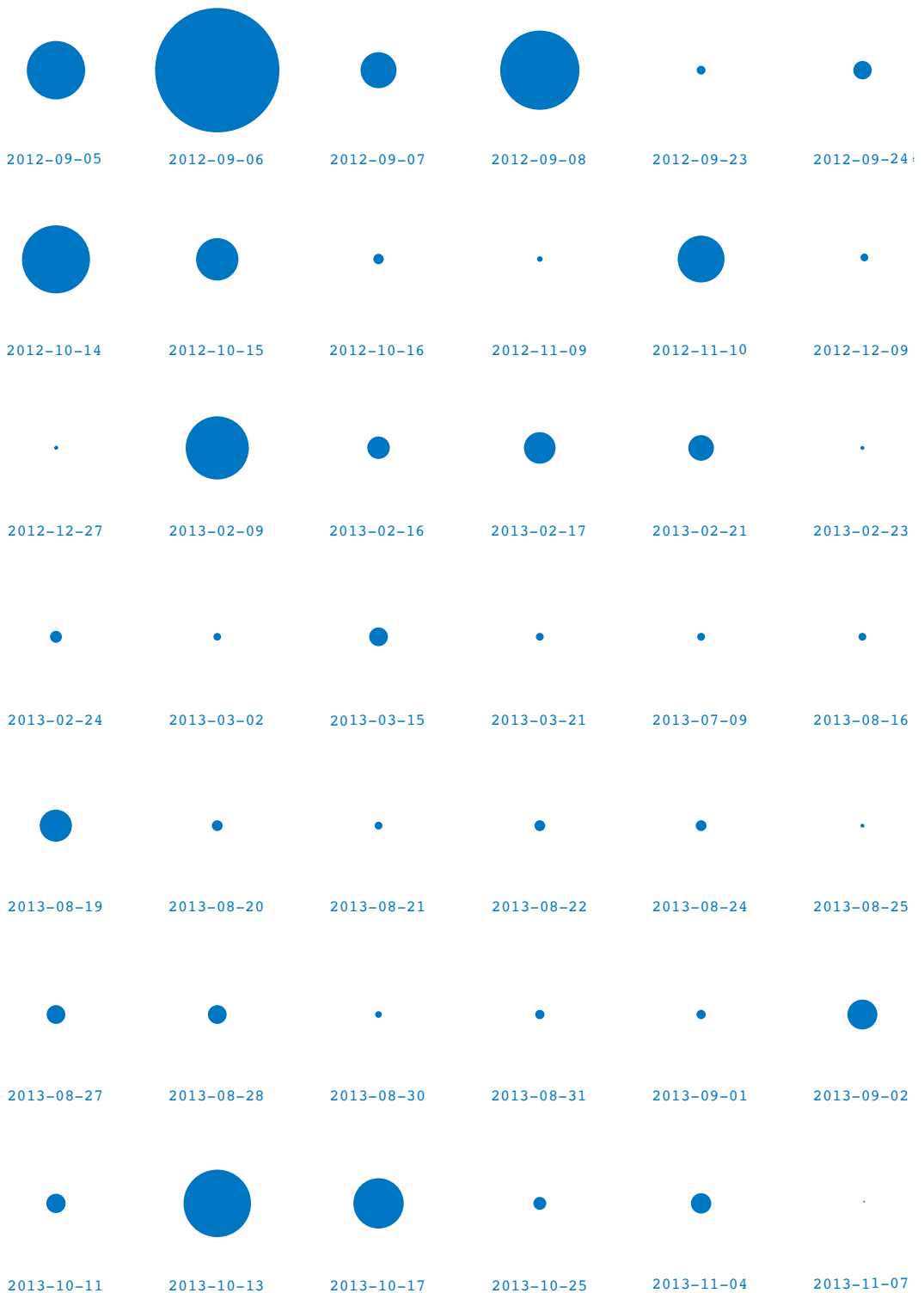
I used obsessively go through all of them and organize my inbox. Then I decided not to. Here I thought I was being clever.

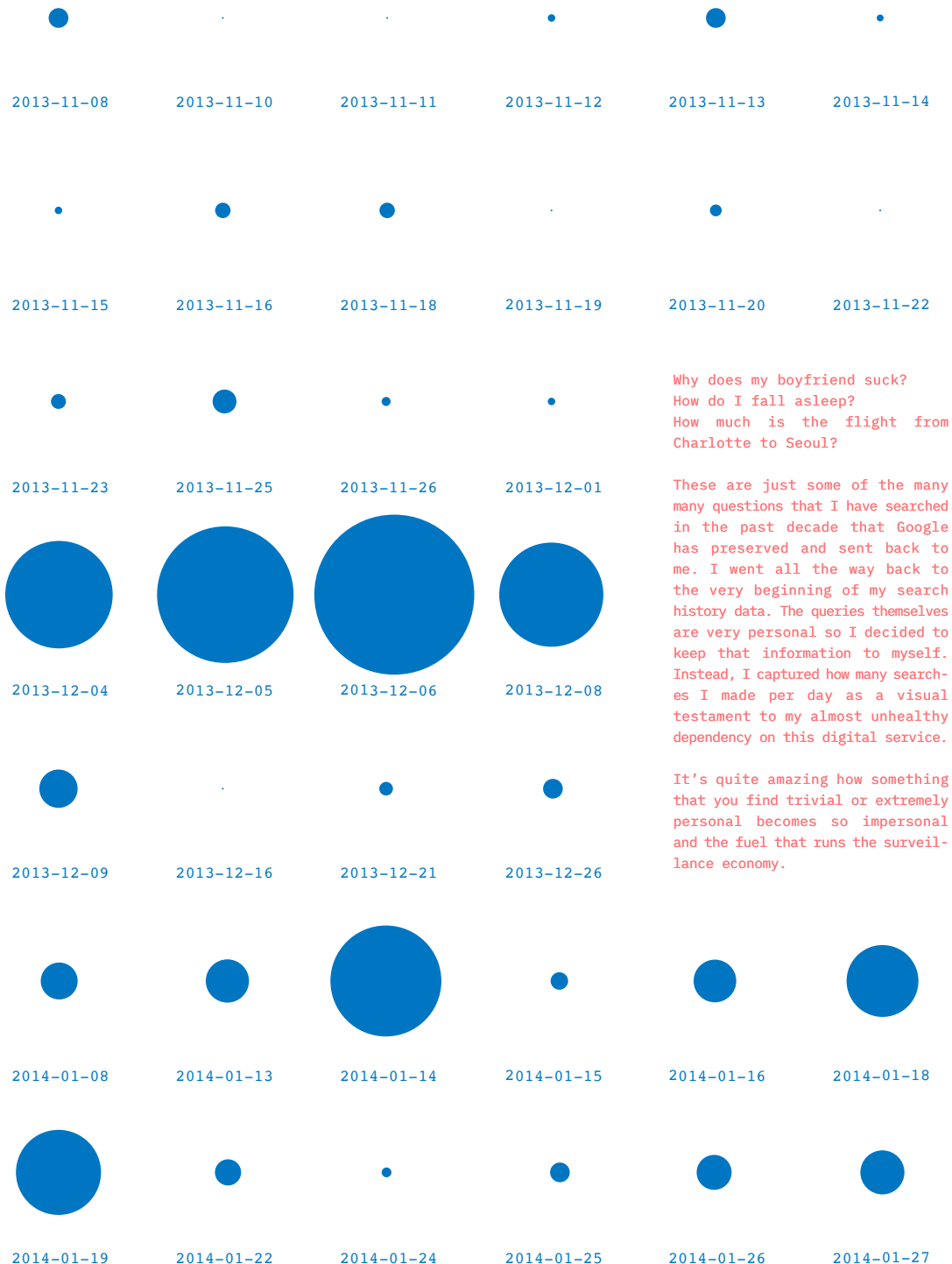
Then I saw this and it hit me that the absence of data is also just as valuable.

Every click matters.
Not clicking also matters.



[illegible]





GOOGLE TAKEOUT HOW-TO GUIDE

You can also explore your Google Takeout data.
Follow the instructions below:

1. Log in to your Google account.
University or corporate Google accounts will not work!
2. Go to takeout.google.com.
3. Click deselect All and scroll down to My Activity. Feel free to choose other products if you wish.
4. Click multiple formats. From edit file formats, choose JSON.
5. Scroll to the bottom and click Next Step.
6. Pick you preferred delivery method, export frequency, file type & size. The default options are perfectly fine.
7. Click create export.
8. Download your files.
You will get an email notification when your files are ready to be downloaded.
9. Choose the folder of your interest (ex. Assistant will give you your Google Home data, Search will give you your search history data, etc).
10. Open MyActivity.json in a text editor or drop it in your browser.
11. Happy browsing through your Google History!

