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Google Authorship Retired Based on Lukewarm Results

by *Judy Thomas*

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On Aug. 28, John Mueller, webmaster trends analyst at Google, announced through a post on his Google+ profile that the [Google Authorship tool was retired](#), effective immediately. Originally designed to enable online authors to display their Google+ profile photos and circle counts alongside their bylines in search engine result pages, Google testing showed that the feature was poorly received by authors and search engine users alike.

Those who were paying close attention may have detected hints of its demise as early as last October, when Google's [Matt Cutts](#) indicated Google would be narrowing authorship search results by 15%, which resulted in less photos displaying and some content carrying only a [byline by December](#). Later, in June, when they streamlined search engine result pages to eliminate author photos and circle counts altogether, [Mueller explained](#) that testing showed that they didn't perform as planned, and had little impact on searchers.

Why It Flopped

Now, in the final analysis, Mueller provided additional insight referencing a few data-driven reasons Google is phasing out the three-year project. For starters, overall participation was light and sporadic. Even those who embraced the concept and had the best intentions sometimes struggled, and botched Google Authorship implementation, which Mueller himself acknowledges could be quirky and challenging.

The set up process required authors or webmasters to create a Google+ account and profile if they weren't currently using the social network. From there, they were to add the blogs and sites containing their published work to their Google+ profile. Finally, when they inserted a [rel="author"] tag into the code for each page of content, they completed the circle, connecting their work back to their Google+ profile.

In response to the lackluster participation, Google made attempts at auto-attribution, which successfully connected an additional segment of authors to their content and enabled them to benefit from the Google Authorship program by default. But this technique was also problematic with some false attributions, and at least one current article from *The New York Times* was erroneously credited to Truman Capote.

The other important stakeholder, the search engine user, appeared equally unmoved by this feature. Google data showed that profile photos and circles displayed alongside articles had little impact on whether the user reacted to the author's listings on the search engine results pages. Which, in the end, Mueller said, caused Google to question their own return on investment.

Before: How Google Authorship mark-up displayed in Search Engine Results Pages

RIAMICHELLE.COM | Miami Fashion Blog



[riamichelle.com/](#) 
by Ria Michelle - in 2,480 Google+ circles
3 days ago - Miami **fashion blogger** Ria Michelle chronicles her outfits, local fashion events and work as a fashion stylist and online boutique owner.

After: How the same content appears now that Google Authorship has dissolved

Ria Michelle | Miami Fashion Blog

[riamichelle.com/](#) 
7 days ago - Miami **fashion blogger** Ria Michelle chronicles her style, travels, local fashion events and work as a fashion stylist and online boutique owner.

These two screenshots illustrate the difference between how search engine results appeared while the Google Authorship program was active, and after it ended. You will note that the top screenshot displays the author's Google+ profile photo and circle information, as well as a byline.

Making Your Content Visible in Search

So what does this mean for authorship? Although Google Authorship tags are not currently being used to display Google+ profile photos and circle data in search engine results, there is no evidence that this data won't benefit authors in some other way. Mueller emphasized that Google is still dedicated to leveraging structured mark-up, perhaps even more so going forward, so they can deliver more targeted, appropriate content to searchers.

And while the Google Authorship development is noteworthy, it's important to remember that it's just one of the many ways authors can garner attention and [assert their credibility online](#). In other words, stay the course because best practices still apply.

Continue to [create keyword-based content](#) that provides your audience with solutions or information they need, and establishes your industry and subject matter expertise. And publish frequently because the search engines still prefer and reward current, quality content.

Also, consider being a guest author on respected and well-followed industry blogs, where you can gain additional exposure, connections and followers, and include a photo and link back to your site, blog or profile. Don't forget to promote your content with teasers on social media, varying your message according to the channel. All of these techniques still matter in the world of search, with or without Google Authorship capabilities.

Tags: [Content Marketing](#), [google authorship](#)

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