Google Inc. is Giving its Users the Chance to Tailor the News to fit their Interests

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SAN FRANCISCO (AP) -- As part of a new look unveiled Wednesday, the English-language version of Google's online news section is offering tools that will enable readers to specify what kinds of stories interest them. For instance, a reader can ask Google to highlight broad topics such as sports, entertainment or business. Readers can also choose something more specific, such as the Los Angeles Lakers.

The news section will automatically show customized summaries, as long as the user is logged in. Users also can ask Google to exclude reports from newspapers, broadcasters and blogs that they don't like, although the company says some coverage from the ostracized media may still slip in. Google curates news from more than 50,000 online outlets.

The left side of the redesigned news section highlights news topics that are attracting a lot of media attention. The right side is devoted to the local weather and stories tied to where a reader lives or works; the location is determined based on the computer's numeric Internet address or a ZIP code the user types in.

Another tool will make it easier to share stories on the popular online hangout Facebook and Twitter's messaging service, as well as on Google's own social forum, Buzz. A series of keyboard shortcuts are also being introduced to make it quicker to navigate through the section.

Google considers the overhaul to be the biggest change to its news section since its 2002 debut. Although it has become widely used service for sifting through media coverage, Google's news section has drawn complaints from some news organizations that believe it sponges off the coverage that costs them millions of dollars to produce each year.

Google says its news section help newspaper publishers and broadcasters by making it easier for readers to find their stories and driving more traffic to their sites. The news section alone accounts for about 1 billion monthly clicks at publishers' websites, according to Google Inc.

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