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## New Google Squared – a useful research tool?

On 9 October, Google introduced a number of improvements to its search tool “[Squared](#)”. Squared was first presented in May 2009 with the idea that instead of going through a big amount of WebPages, the new search tool would provide for a collection of facts presented in tables of items and attributes, which is what Google refers to as “squares”. Google says that Squared is a helpful tool when you are searching for more complex information that the normal Google search tool cannot manage and you need to visit several WebPages in order to collect all the material needed. The result is similar to a spreadsheet, and you are able to see the websites that serve as sources for the information in the squares.

However, when Squared was launched the initial reactions were mostly negative. The main critique was that the results were rather irrational and illogical. Several improvements have thus been made now. More squares with information can be included, and according to Google, the quality of information has improved and is ranked based on relevance and whether high quality facts are available. Data can now also be exported to Google Spreadsheet or a CSV file. Additionally, Squared is re-designed to learn from edits and corrections of its users.

So how well are these improvements working out? And can Google Squared be useful for Caucasus-related research? Unfortunately, Squared is still a limited search tool in several aspects. The basic idea of Squared is sound and could probably come in handy for students of intermediary stages of research, or, to take an example that Google uses, to find out different information about US presidents. As an advanced research tool, however, it is still not entirely adequate. For example, when searching for Scandinavian countries you are provided with some basic information ranging from language, way of governance, GDP per capita and the number of Internet users. Indeed, this provides for an overview and comparison. A similar search for the Caucasian countries does not provide for an as useful overview, though. The information is scarce and there are not a variety of sources either, as the absolute majority of information squares derives from Wikipedia. Moreover, for many of the attributes there are no values found, such as for unemployment rates and information about national industries. The recent improvements to Squared are thus not a real breakthrough yet. Also, quite surprisingly, English is listed as the preferred language in all three countries. If Squared would thus be used by someone with little knowledge about the Caucasus, it would give a slightly misleading picture.

All in all, very little information is to be found about any topics on the Caucasus. For more advanced purposes and social science research related to Caucasus, it is simply not a useful tool. In comparison to the usual Google search and Google Scholar, it is difficult to see the additional advantages and usefulness that Squared would bring. Google points out that the program is only in its experimental stage, and it remains to be seen if a person wishing to deepen their knowledge about different topics in the Caucasus could gain from Google Squared in the future.