



**Searching Google for 'Finger Condoms'**  
By Raymond Hu

Code No.	Code Word.
27211	<i>Decadel</i> .....
27212	<i>Decadence</i> .....
27213	<i>Decagon</i> .....
27214	<i>Decalcify</i> .....
27215	<i>Decalogue</i> .....
27216	<i>Decampment</i> ....
27217	<i>Decana</i> .....
27218	<i>Decandria</i> .....
27219	<i>Decantate</i> .....
27220	<i>Decapitate</i> .....
27221	<i>Decapodal</i> .....
27222	<i>Decastitch</i> .....
27223	<i>Decastyle</i> .....
27224	<i>Decayer</i> .....
27225	<i>Decease</i> .....
27226	<i>Decedent</i> .....
27227	<i>Deceitless</i> .....
27228	<i>Deceivable</i> .....
27229	<i>Decemfid</i> .....
27230	<i>Decemviral</i> .....
27231	<i>Decennary</i> .....
27232	<i>Decennoval</i> .....
27233	<i>Decent</i> .....
27234	<i>Deceptory</i> .....
27235	<i>Decide</i> .....
27236	<i>Decidedly</i> .....
27237	<i>Decidement</i> .....
27238	<i>Deciduous</i> .....
27239	<i>Decimalize</i> .....
27240	<i>Decimate</i> .....

Design writer Phil Patton likened it to the urban legend about 'finding a finger in one's bowl of fast-food chili', but the phenomenon, in this case, is unsettling precisely because the digits are not detached. Rather, the scanned hands belong to the lowly data-entry workers at Google, who process books page by page for the tech giant's Borgesian digitisation project. The scanners' invisible handiwork occasionally turns up on the page: digitally embalmed hands resembling grotesque analogs of pressed flowers. Their fingers, clad in purposeful prophylactics that help them to grip the pages, are radically, disturbingly, decontextualised.

Scan quality notwithstanding, Google Books has resolved its copyright issues since its launch in 2004, with 25 million titles scanned as of October 2015 (the 100 million or so to go will take several decades at least). In the meantime, artists have aestheticised the glitch: Noting that many of the manual labourers are people of colour, Andrew Norman Wilson's 2012 project 'ScanOps' presents the scanned hands alongside investigative reporting on everything from Google's hierarchical employee badge colours to trivia such as the fact that 'mass market books can be sliced open and fed into scanners, but books from library collections need to be photographed from above'. All-seeing though its eye may be, Google still needs helping hands to turn the pages of the books.