From The Sunday Times

February 1, 2009

Points

The true carbon footprint of going online

In your story on data centers (Revealed: the environmental impact of Google searches, News, January 11) I was quoted out of context. What I said in full was: "Data centers are among the very most energy-intensive facilities imaginable, often using 100 times as much energy per unit of floor area (and thus emitting 100 times as much greenhouse gas emissions) as a typical office building. Fortunately, there are scores of technologies and management practices that can improve efficiency. State-of-the art facilities can cost-effectively reduce energy demand by up to 80% compared to typical practice."

In my view, the article conflated energy used by the searcher's own computer with that in control of Google or any other search engine and erroneously implied that the alternative means of information acquisition produce no greenhouse-gas emissions, when, in fact, the emissions are higher.

Evan Mills
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, USA