

Updates to Chapter on Privacy in Cyberspace (4): Cookies, Glasses, Readings

M. E. Kabay, PhD, CISSP-ISSMP

Here's yet more new material I just added in another marathon editing task, working on updating a chapter about privacy that had not been updated since 2008.

COOKIES

Cookies are small files stored on a user's computer so that a Web server can access information such as identity, browsing history, preferences, and so on.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) has a long history of what it defines as abuse of cookies:

EPIC filed a complaint ... with the Federal Trade Commission on February 10, 2000, concerning the information collection practices of DoubleClick Inc., a leading Internet advertising firm, and its business partners. The complaint alleges that DoubleClick is unlawfully tracking the online activities of Internet users (through the placement of cookies) and combining surfing records with detailed personal profiles contained in a national marketing database. EPIC's complaint follows the merger of DoubleClick and Abacus Direct, the country's largest catalog database firm. DoubleClick has announced its intention to combine anonymous Internet profiles in the DoubleClick database with the personal information contained in the Abacus database.[19]

For extensive resources about legal aspects of Web cookies, see the EPIC *Cookies* Web page.[19]

GOOGLE GLASSES

A technology that was garnering a great deal of media attention as this chapter was going to press in July 2013 was the *Google Glass*, a wearable, networked computer that includes a camera and projects information in the user's field of view. The device can not only record information from the user's environment, it can provide information about recognized people in the field of view.[20]

Great concern has been expressed by privacy advocates that information about individuals' every move will become available before any clear rules are established concerning the protection or use of that information. For example, EPIC writes,

When individuals are moving about in public and private spaces, they do not expect to be tracked wherever they go. However, this expectation is being challenged as cell phones and other electronic devices now collect and store location data throughout the day. The expansion of location tracking technologies has significant implications for consumers and for their constitutional privacy rights.

Over the last 10 years, law enforcement has stepped up its use of location tracking technologies, such as GPS (Global Positioning System) trackers and cell phones, to

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monitor the movements of individuals who may or may not be suspected of a crime. GPS is a geolocation network that consists of satellites and receivers that can calculate the precise location of a GPS device 24-hours a day (subject to environmental constraints). As of March 19, 2013, there are 31 satellites in the GPS constellation. The satellites and ground stations in the GPS network are maintained by the U.S. Air Force Global Positioning Systems Wing. GPS satellites are designed to transmit three-dimensional location data (longitude, latitude and altitude) as well as precise velocity and timing information to an unlimited number of users simultaneously. A GPS receiver is all that one needs to access the service. GPS satellites can not receive any data, they can only broadcast location and timing information.[21]

Further Reading

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Bygrave, L. A. *Data Protection Law: Approaching Its Rationale, Logic and Limits*. Kluwer Law International, 2002.

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Rosen, J. and B. Wittes, editors. *Constitution 3.0: Freedom and Technological Change*. Brookings Institution Press, 2013.

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Solove, D. J. *Understanding Privacy*. Harvard University Press, 2010.

Solove, D. J. *Nothing to Hide: The False Tradeoff between Privacy and Security*. Yale University Press, 2013.

Stewart, D., editor. *Social Media and the Law: A Guidebook for Communication Students and Professionals*. Routledge, 2012.

Ziegler, K. S. *Human Rights and Private Law: Privacy as Autonomy*. Hart, 2007.

WEB SITES

- American Civil Liberties Union: <http://www.aclu.org/>
- Electronic Privacy Information Center: <http://epic.org>
- European Commission, Justice and Home Affairs, Data Protection: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/index_en.htm
- Federal Trade Commission, Privacy Initiatives: <http://business.ftc.gov/privacy-and-security>
- National Conference of State Legislatures, NCSL 50—State Legislative Tracking Resources: <http://www.ncsl.org/legislative-staff.aspx?tabs=856,34,736>

Privacy Updates

- Privacy, Business and Law—Pandab is an online newsletter summarizing the top news articles on privacy, law and business: <http://www.pandab.org>
- Privacy Exchange—a global information resource on consumers, commerce, and data protection worldwide: <http://www.privacyexchange.org>
- Privacy International—Privacy International (PI) is a human rights group formed in 1990 as a watchdog on surveillance and privacy invasions by governments and corporations: <http://www.privacyinternational.org>

ENDNOTES

- [19] “EPIC Files FTC Privacy Complaint Against DoubleClick.” Cookies, Electronic Privacy Information Center. <http://epic.org/privacy/internet/cookies/>
- [20] “Google Glass may compromise privacy of user and others.” KTVU TV (2013-05-16). <http://www.ktvu.com/news/news/special-reports/google-glass-may-compromise-privacy-user-and-other/nXtHx/>
- [21] Locational Privacy. Electronic Privacy Information Center. http://epic.org/privacy/location_privacy/

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M. E. Kabay, < <mailto:mekabay@gmail.com> > PhD, CISSP-ISSMP, specializes in security and operations management consulting services and teaching. He Professor of Computer Information Systems in the School of Business and Management at Norwich University. Visit his Website for white papers and course materials. < <http://www.mekabay.com/> >