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Tech Weekly



Tech Weekly podcast: Andrew Lewman on Tor and anonymity online

One of the team behind the software millions use to retain anonymity online discusses the complex issue of web identity

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Presented by [Aleks Krotoski](#) and produced by [Jason Phipps](#)
 theguardian.com, Tuesday 24 April 2012 15.59 BST

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In the second of our anonymous double-bill interviews, **Aleks Krotoski** talks to **Andrew Lewman**, executive director of the Tor software project.

Tor is an encryption software, known as "onion routing", that allows people to browse online anonymously, hiding their location and avoiding traffic analytics associated with their online activity.

The software began as a project sponsored by the US naval research laboratory but is now run as a not-for-profit business that offers the software free of charge online.

Aleks and Andrew discuss the role of Tor and its wish to create an anonymous space online. They also talk about the growing trend for companies to collate and monitor your online activity in order to build up a profile of you for monetary gain.

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The bigger a community gets, the easier and more virulent anonymity becomes



Philip Hensher: The possibility, and the dangers, of anonymity started to become apparent long before we all went online, and both have only continued to grow

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In defence of anonymity online

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surreydude

25 April 2012 6:21pm

5

Great couple of podcasts - a topic that deserves some considered debate.

Something that UK residents should be aware of is that unsurprisingly, since the Tor network is used by those wishing to obscure their illegal activities (such as distribution of child abuse images), if you participate in this network, you will inevitably at some point be technically guilty of distribution yourself. I've have seen advocates of using the Tor network for filesharing suggesting that when approached by the ISPs or authorities about such activities, users respond with a standard "I don't know what traffic goes through my Tor node therefore I am not responsible for it" letter, but I believe in the case of this being illegal images (rather than mp3s and movies) the view of the authorities will be somewhat different. Beware, and be informed, Tor users!



Anixia

25 April 2012 8:53pm

2

Interesting podcast. I wonder if just by using a service like Tor you are making yourself a target. There is something to be said for the anonymity of the masses. Most peoples online habits are of no interest to anyone but advertisers and marketers and perhaps a few statisticians.

I do have concerns about the abuse of privacy by corporations, but most of that is just for profit. A bigger concern is the use and abuse of facial recognition software, Facebook, flickr etc... one thing is to 'trust' your own government, another is to be abused by online organised crime.

Like many people my work involves constant use of a computer and online resources, even if for some reason I wanted to cover my home use, it is impossible to hide what I do when I'm at work. Many people would fall into that category. I really don't care too much about advertisers cookies, they're just annoying like junk mail, but identity theft really is a concern and I already know of one friend who had their bank account drained. Fortunately, the bank took the hit and restored their money... but it does prove its a real concern.

I do think people have the right to remain anonymous online, its really no ones business to know exactly who you are. You don't walk down the street with a huge name tag to let everyone who you are and what you're doing, so it should be the same in the internet streets and highways and byways, but simply by using the net you are placing a name tag and map on your back. I equally don't know if the person I just passed and said hello to is a criminal, or a porn merchant etc., that's the job of the police (hopefully uncorrupted ones) . Even though I have picture icon on the guardian, I only posted it because I hated the standard ones and its not actually a real picture, I made sure it couldn't be used for anything else, but most people don't think like that or have the skills.

Privacy is an undisputed personal right of every person who lives in a democracy, we need to fight against any government that says differently or tries to use spurious excuses for intruding into our privacy. It must always be our right to choose how much we allow strangers to know about us.

Thanks for the podcast and coffee, time to get back to work.



Ocoonassa

26 April 2012 3:12am

7

Response to surreydude, 25 April 2012 6:21pm

Beware, and be informed, Tor users!

The traffic is encrypted. Afaik you don't have to run as a node to connect, even if you do nobody has a clue what's passing through the node, why would ISP's or the authorities be approaching you about sending and receiving encrypted traffic?



FoxandDuck

26 April 2012 4:33am

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