Privacy And The Internet Essay, Research Paper

Privacy and the Internet

Robert Wright wrote an essay featured in Time Magazine on October 19, 1998. The essay was called Sin in the Global Village and it focuses on personal privacy in cyberspace.

The Internet is a rapidly growing web of information that more and more people are using. The benefits are for instance immediate access to information from all around the world, electronic mail that arrive at a blink of an eye, being able to publish ideas on personal web pages, and even downloading a contemporary pictures over Waikiki beach just to see if there s any waves etc.

Robert Wright is introducing the idea that the Internet has become an instrument of privacy killing. In the same way that the public is getting access to countless bytes of information, the accomplished computer user gets access to the private preferences and thoughts of the public. Wright suggests that people should be careful when publishing a Web page containing personal thoughts because anyone with Web-authoring software can easily trace the URL (electronic address) back to it s origin. In short, people s visions about a totally anonymous Internet are false because of the electronic trail that is left for others to find.

Linda Tripp, who taped her conversations with the former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, exposed President Clinton s recent oral sex scandal by means of surveillance. Wright is suggesting that this could happen to you too. Computer surveillance isn t all that uncommon these days so one should look out for what you write and where you go on the Internet because someday it might be used against you.

Disintegration of privacy complicates life. Wright lists some of the precautions people have to think about in ordering a hotel room for an extra marital date: don t write e-mail to each other about it, don t use your credit card in paying for the room, and don t look into the security cameras in the lobby, and look out for strategically placed cameras that record pictures that are transmitted over the Internet.

The Internet s front of total anonymity has created a lot of temptations in people especially in the pornographic and gambling sites. Wright means that the fear of retribution from computer hackers or other advanced computer users is a good thing mainly because the fear might help people stay in line.

Privacy isn t always good. Wright presents a recent study that showed that 1 in every 4 kids born in parts of Liverpool had a different biological father than the father on the birth certificate. The !Kung San tribe in Africa, a hunter-gatherer tribe where very little privacy is obtained, had the same study and it showed that only 1 in 50 had different biological father, and note that they have no modern contraceptive technology. Wright states that these results could be because of the possibilities that modern anonymity can offer.

The Internet has made my life a lot more convenient with the accessibility of information on just about anything at the tip of my fingers. When I do my homework, for instance and there is something in the book I don t quite understand, all it takes is a couple clicks on the mouse and I m enlightened. If I compare that convenience to getting to a nearby library, the long walk pails in comparison. Some might argue that because anyone can publish their ideas, the Internet isn t a credible source. The quality and quantity makes for a credible source, and you can find more quantity and quality on the Internet than you would in the largest library in the world.

The Internet is a lot more then just a gigantic library. It is also a way for people to seek entertainment meet other individuals all under the privacy of first names and nicknames. But how confidential is one s identity really? Robert Wright explains that one s identity might not be all that anonymous after all. This scare s me a little, because when I go on the net I want to be able to visit any pages, download stuff or chat with people without the possibility of someone monitoring me. The thought of my future career coming to a halt because of what I chatted about when I was on the Internet as a kid, is a scary thought. Wright compares, in a very interesting way, the Clinton sex scandal to what actually can happen to you or me. He writes that all it takes is a person with some knowledge about computers and a Linda Tripp -attitude about surveillance and you might be ridiculed or even impeached in front of the public.

The Internet cameras that are put up frequently around the world for the purpose of people being able to watch what is going on live on the net may also be used for surveillance. This greatly impacts my sense of privacy, not only when I m sitting in front of the computer but also when I m outdoors. Just imagine that these instruments could be used to map an entire lifetime, and during a lifetime mistakes are bound to happen and these mistakes might just be used against you.

People shouldn t hesitate in using this contemporary phenomenon called the Internet. Is their any reason to panic? I certainly don t think so. Sure, someone could be monitoring your every move in the same way that someone could follow you on your way to work. But what good would that do? Somehow I think the people that should worry are the people that are doing illegal things over the net and that seems justified to me. This reminds me of something my host parents told me when I went to high school in Maryland that applies to Internet users: Be responsible .

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