

Web founder makes online privacy plea

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British software genius Tim Berners-Lee gives a speech during the 18th International World Wide Web Conference in Madrid. Berners-Lee said that plans by Internet service providers to deliver targeted adverts to consumers based on their Web searches threaten online privacy and should be opposed.

Plans by Internet service providers to deliver targeted adverts to consumers based on their Web searches threaten online privacy and should be opposed, the founder of the Web said Wednesday.

"I just want to know that when I click on a link it is between me and the Web, and the [Internet service provider](#) is not going to immediately characterise me in different categories for advertising or insurance or for government use," Tim Berners-Lee told a Web conference in Madrid.

"The postman does not open my mail, the telephone company does not listen to my telephone conversations. [Internet](#) use is often more intimate than those things," he added.

New software called Webwise allows Internet service providers to show adverts to their clients based on their Web browsing habits instead of based on the content of a single Web page as currently happens.

Several British Internet service providers, including BT and Virgin Media, have said they are considering using the software, which is aimed at making the Web more financially profitable for advertisers.

With the help of other scientists at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), Berners-Lee set up the [Web](#) in 1989 to allow thousands of scientists around the world to stay in touch.

The WWW technology -- which simplifies the process of searching for information on the Internet -- was first made more widely available from 1991 after CERN was unable to ensure its development, and the organisation made a landmark decision two years later not to levy royalties.

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