Google acquires Web security firm reCAPTCHA

September 16 2009

A Google employee rides a bicycle by a sign at the company's headquarters, in 2007 in Mountain View, California. Google announced on Wednesday that it has acquired reCAPTCHA, a company that produces the squiggly words used by websites to guard against spam and fraud.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Google announced on Wednesday that it has acquired reCAPTCHA, a company that produces the squiggly words used by websites to guard against spam and fraud.

ReCAPTCHA Inc., a spin-off of Carnegie Mellon University's Computer Science Department, has been acquired by Google. The Pittsburgh company developed online puzzles that serve the dual purpose of protecting Web sites and digitizing printed text.

The reCAPTCHA puzzles, which consist of words with distorted letters that computer users must decipher to register for services online or otherwise gain access to a Web site, began as a research project of Luis

von Ahn, assistant professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon. ReCAPTCHAs were introduced in 2007 and are used by many leading Web sites. The company, ReCAPTCHA Inc., was founded by von Ahn in 2008.

Like similar CAPTCHA (Completely Automatic Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart) puzzles, reCAPTCHAs distinguish human visitors to Web sites from automated intruders. But reCAPTCHAs are created using words from printed texts that current optical character recognition programs are incapable of reading. So when humans solve the puzzle, they also help digitize pre-computer-age books, newspapers and other printed materials.

"Google is the best fit for reCAPTCHA," von Ahn said. "From the very start, people often assumed the project was connected to Google, so it only makes sense that reCAPTCHA Inc. ultimately would find a home within Google."

Multiple ties exist between Google and Carnegie Mellon's School of Computer Science, von Ahn noted. Many researchers from the two organizations collaborate with each other and Google's Pittsburgh engineering office is situated on Carnegie Mellon's campus. In 2006, Google licensed the ESP Game, an online game devised by von Ahn, for use as the Google Image Labeler.

Von Ahn will remain on the computer science faculty, but will also work at Google's Pittsburgh engineering office.

ReCAPTCHA Inc. is among the startups that have participated in Carnegie Mellon's Project Olympus, which provides advice, incubator space and investor connections to help faculty and students explore the commercial potential of their ideas.

Source: Carnegie Mellon University (news : web)

Citation: Google acquires Web security firm reCAPTCHA (2009, September 16) retrieved 20 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2009-09-google-web-firm-recaptcha.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.