

Internet privacy manifesto calls for more consumer power

June 4 2015



Credit: Wikipedia

A revolutionary power shift from internet giants such as Google to ordinary consumers is critically overdue, according to new research from a University of East Anglia (UEA) online privacy expert.

In a manifesto that ranges from "the right to be treated fairly on the [internet](#)" to finding a better, more nuanced approach to using the internet as an archive, Dr Paul Bernal of UEA's School of Law delves deeper into his research on the so-called 'right to be forgotten.' His paper, called 'A right to be remembered? Or the internet, warts and all,' will be presented today at the annual Privacy Law Scholars' Conference at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr Bernal, a lecturer in information technology, intellectual property and media law, was invited to write the paper for the prestigious conference, where an international group of scholars and practitioners discuss current issues around privacy law.

Dr Bernal said: "We ask a great deal of the internet, and much of what we ask for is contradictory.

"Our perceptions of the internet are similarly confused and contradictory. We think everything on the net lasts forever and we're worried about everything being forgotten.

"We think anonymity abounds but that the security services and Google know everything there is to know about us.

"Google itself is a paradox: at times we treat it as a philanthropic indexer of the internet and champion of freedom of expression, at other times as an evil mega-corporation driven only by profit or trying to control the world and indeed us.

"We expect it to provide imaginative, innovative and engaging products

and services - and we expect it to do so for nothing, and without invading our privacy or gathering our data."

In his paper, Dr Bernal said recent examples, such as the Google Spain case, demonstrate an increasing willingness of regulators to challenge Google, Facebook and other 'internet giants' that have access to vast swathes of personal data.

But because the internet is not a permanent archive and data isn't indexed by neutral, purely algorithmic services - rather "created by humans with biases, assumptions and faults" - Dr Bernal said those affected need more control over what they want, or don't want, displayed in searches that concern them.

Dr Bernal said: "Sometimes what people would like to be remembered becomes lost, whilst at other times things that people would rather were forgotten is inconveniently but seemingly permanently remembered.

"Who might be the appropriate people to decide what are the 'right' stories to promote and what are the 'wrong' stories that need to be demoted or delisted? And how and when can it be right to interfere with an algorithm that is a key trade secret for a business like Google?

"The internet is messy, dynamic and not just imperfect but imperfectible, something that is particularly important to understand in the context of forgetting and remembering.

"That does not mean nothing can be done or should be done, but that the limitations on what can and should be done should be understood - and the need to constantly reassess the situation accepted.

"Very few of us want to be forgotten, but most of us would like more influence on how we are remembered - and more importantly, how we

are seen in the present, and how decisions about us are made and upon what basis."

More information: 'A right to be remembered? Or the internet, warts and all' is delivered June 4, 2015 at the Privacy Law Scholars' Conference, held at the University of California, Berkeley Center for Law & Technology.

Provided by University of East Anglia

Citation: Internet privacy manifesto calls for more consumer power (2015, June 4) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-06-internet-privacy-manifesto-consumer-power.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.