

Have journalists found the inventor of Bitcoin or simply been duped?

December 10 2015, by David Glance



Will the real Nakamoto please stand up? Credit: flickr/Taichiro Ueki, CC BY-NC-ND

Two US technology sites have claimed that the creator of the digital cryptocurrency Bitcoin is an Australian businessman called Dr Craig S

Wright. Both [Wired](#) and [Gizmodo](#) have based their conclusions on documents and emails "leaked" to them by an unnamed hacker who claimed to have worked for Wright. The anonymous source had allegedly first [shopped](#) this evidence to a NY Times reporter Nathaniel Popper, but then passed it on to both Wired and Gizmodo after Popper declined to believe the link.

The quest to unmask the enigmatic creator of Bitcoin, who went by the name of Satoshi Nakamoto has led to a [range](#) of suspects. A journalist from Newsweek was certain that she had found the man in 2014 when she revealed her suspect as Dorian S Nakamoto, a collector of model trains and a US physicist. He eventually got a lawyer to issue a statement saying he knew nothing about Bitcoin.

This time though, the journalists from both Wired and Gizmodo were sure they had found their man. Wired proclaimed

"The signs point to Craig Steven Wright, a man who [...] fits the cryptocurrency creator's profile in nearly every detail."

Except that, he actually doesn't.

To be clear, there was never any direct evidence presented, nor did Craig Wright ever explicitly claim to be Nakamoto. However, if taken on face value, the evidence was actually reasonably compelling. The problem was, as NY Times reporter Nathaniel Popper explained, Wright's writing and personality didn't match that of Nakamoto's.

That personality has been brought into even more question by the Australian police who [raided](#) Wright's home and business on behalf of the Australian Tax Office (ATO). This was apparently unrelated to the revelations of Wright's possible link to the founder of Bitcoin.

We actually have specific evidence that Craig Wright is very unlikely to be Satoshi Nakamoto. In 2011, Wright wrote several articles for The Conversation. They were all around the area of cybersecurity but Wright was also a prolific commenter on both his own and others' articles. The comments are largely spoken with a voice of authority and are largely combative in nature. In 112 comments, Wright mentions Bitcoin only once, at the end of a very long list of financial alternatives to PayPal. He said:

"Bit Coin (Bit Coin) is a digital currency. Bit Coin offers a full peer-to-peer currency solution. P2P transfer of funds is available using methods that can even be untraceable. They're a ways using this technology to transfer funds that cannot be intercepted or stopped."

For someone who allegedly invented Bitcoin, he was unable to spell the currency correctly. He didn't even name it as the first alternative to PayPal. He suggested Google Checkout as the most likely digital payment system to replace PayPal's dominance in the electronic payment space.

In another comment, Wright derided the idea of imposing a cost into [financial transactions](#). Of course, this is one of the main ideas about how Bitcoin transactions will be verified by Bitcoin miners once all Bitcoins are created.

Wright's comments always drew on his own publications, his own blog posts and the authority he claimed through his many qualifications.

"In reply to Bruce Baer Arnold Actually bruce, I have an LLM (with comendation). Hence why I know who little effect it [sic]"

On The Conversation, Wright was pro-capitalist, anti-hacktivist and was pro-corporate. This contrasted starkly with the voice of the Nakamoto

who originally [posted](#) about Bitcoin on the cryptography mailing list. That Nakamoto had an entirely different voice that was largely patient and respectful and sought feedback not absolute submission. That Nakamoto would have known how to spell Bitcoin (he rarely made spelling mistakes in his writing unlike Wright's writing that was plagued with them), would have suggested Bitcoin as the first alternative to PayPal and was not a supporter of financial third parties mediating financial transactions.

Wright no doubt got involved with Bitcoin at some stage. He has subsequently started businesses and he may well have been involved in Bitcoin mining. This was unlikely to have been before 2011 however based on his lack of interest and knowledge on the subject at that time. Wright was also active on question and answer site Quora but didn't mention Bitcoin or cryptocurrencies until [2014](#).

The journalists writing about Wright seemed to make no attempt to verify the identity or story of the original source of the information supplied them.

The provided documents simply don't stack up with evidence still available - if they had really looked. Their supplied documents for example, had a reference to a blog post (since deleted allegedly) that doesn't show up on an archived [snapshot](#) of the site. At the time, Wright was not talking about Bitcoin or releasing versions of the software but was learning Linux commands and disputing criticism of a publication on the subject of electronically wiping disks.

As to the identity of the hacker. He could have been Wright himself, seeking notoriety, or simply someone with a grudge against Wright, or a hacker just doing it for the "lulz". In any event, he, or she, succeeded in pranking a few journalists.

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