New Exhibition

OUT OF CONTROL
What the Internet Knows about You

April 19 to the End of 2012 /Ars Electronica Center Linz

(Linz, April 19, 2012) A clash over the possession and dissemination of personal data is now raging worldwide. Politicians and bureaucrats, corporate executives and civil rights activists—it seems they're all squabbling about who may, should or must know what about us and retain it how long! And regardless of who finally prevails in this skirmish, the victory comes with a short expiration date. Why? Because the internet and the services that make it up are changing so rapidly that we users and our elected officials can hardly keep pace. Social networks like Facebook, search engines like Google and all the rest—they know so much about us it's scary! From the moment we get logged into our Google account, our online activities are comprehensively registered—what we buy, the vacations we book, which songs, films and books we like, the videos we view. Thus, because it's completely automatic, it's a simple matter for Google to figure out if we're single or have a family, what income bracket we're in, what we devote most of our energies to and what our sexual preferences are. And Facebook already has its feelers stretched out far beyond its home turf. There are more and more websites we can log on to with our Facebook profile, and, sure, that's really convenient, but it also gives a growing number of services the ability to gain access to the data that we've—voluntarily—revealed on Facebook. Whereby "voluntarily" is true only to a certain extent here, since in many cases all that's necessary is for our Facebook friends to register on a particular website. "Out of Control – What the Internet Knows about You," the Ars Electronica Center's new exhibition produced jointly with the Department of Secure Information Systems at the Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences' Hagenberg Campus, scrutinizes the constantly shifting border between the public and private spheres, and the opportunities and risks this entails for us users. "Out of Control – What the Internet Knows about You" will be running from April 19th to the end of 2012.

In cooperation with the Department of Secure Information Systems at Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences' Hagenberg Campus

The Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences is the largest such educational institution in Austria. At its Hagenberg Campus, the school offers practice-oriented higher education in the fields of computer science, communications and media. Since 2000, the Department of Secure Information Systems has offered both bachelor's and master's programs in Secure Information Systems (formerly Computer & Media Security) to train security experts in information & communication technology including data security, network security, system security, secure business organization as well as in such cutting-edge areas as cyber-criminality, mobile security, social network security and forensics.

Out of Control – What the Internet Knows about You

Timeline / Ars Electronica (AT)

An extensive timeline installed in the Ars Electronica Center elaborates on the history and development of the World Wide Web. The graphics range from a depiction of the Unix multiuser operating system developed at Bell Laboratories in 1963 to the telecommunications data retention law that just went into effect in Austria.

Telecommunications Data Retention / Ars Electronica (AT)

Since April 1, telecommunications data retention has been in force in Austria too. The Ars Electronica Center's interactive station lets the history of this legislation pass in review. Users can see exactly what information is being gathered and stored about their cell phone and computer usage, and join a discussion—on-site as well as online—about various aspects of telecommunications data retention.

Newstweek / http://newstweek.com/

"Newstweek" is a device for manipulating news that can be accessed at WLAN hotspots. Equipment built into a conventional electrical outlet plug makes it possible to alter news being read on laptops, cell phones and tablets without users getting suspicious (initially). The point of "Newstweek" is to point out that our reality is increasingly imparted via media and determined by them. Whereas news is read ever more frequently in digital form, its propagation is still done according to a traditional top-down model that, in turn, makes it susceptible to influence exerted by politicians and businesspeople. "Newstweek" represents an intervention in precisely this model, offering citizens an opportunity to manipulate the media themselves and do a little spin-doctoring of their own.

face to facebook / Paolo Cirio, Alessandro Ludovico (both IT) / http://www.face-to-facebook.net/

To conclude their "Hacking Monopolism" trilogy, Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico took aim at big game online: Facebook. Using a home-brew computer program, they harvested a million Facebook profiles, filtered them with facial recognition software, and then grouped them according to similarities of the data as well as the faces. Finally, the profiles reordered in this way were displayed on a dating site the duo set up, and the profiled individuals were introduced to each other via e-mail. Within the very first week of its existence online, "face to facebook" was already making one hell of a splash, ranging from coverage in media worldwide to death threats and lawsuits. Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico were ultimately forced to take their project off the internet.

faceless / Manu Luksch (AT) / http://www.ambienttv.net/pdf/facelessproject.pdf

Austrian artist Manu Luksch shot her film "faceless" without the slightest cinematography on her part. The filming was done exclusively by public surveillance video cameras. London was the location of this unusual shoot. Once the filming was completed, the artist sued to obtain all footage in which she appeared. The faces of all other—unintentional—cast members were erased or concealed in consideration of their right to privacy. The end product is a film well worth seeing, one that focuses on increasingly pervasive surveillance in public spaces.

Password Hacker Station / Department of Secure Information Systems, Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences (AT)

A good password is hard to guess. A so-called password recovery tool is a readily available computer program that lets users quickly test passwords. Here, visitors can see how hard it is to figure out a particular password and how long that would take. Simple passwords can even be hacked live with a gamer PC. Of course, there are also suggestions for coming up with strong passwords.

Security/Privacy Check / Department of Secure Information Systems, Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences (AT)

The Department of Secure Information Systems at the Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences' Hagenberg Campus has developed a security check that generates custom-tailored, practical suggestions for maximizing security in dealings with smartphones and notebooks, the internet, a Facebook account and Google. It starts by posing questions that establish how the particular user deals with these new media, and then gives individualized solutions to security issues.

Facebook Security / Department of Secure Information Systems, Upper Austria University of Applied Sciences (AT)

Facebook profiles governed by standard settings are poorly protected from the prying eyes of visiting undesirables. Those who trust these setting might, under certain circumstances, be in for unpleasant surprises. This installation lets visitors see who can access what information in an inadequately protected Facebook profile. Then, they can get hands-on experience with the settings that really do protect their profile.

Handytracking – Malte Spitz (DE) / http://www.zeit.de/datenschutz/malte-spitz-vorratsdaten

Malte Spitz (DE) is a member of the national committee of Germany's Green Party and an outspoken opponent of telecommunications data retention. To show how far these legal provisions go to implement the permanent surveillance of respectable citizens not suspected of any crime, he sued to force T-Mobile to release the data about him that it had stored for the period August 2009 to February 2010. With the help of an interactive map developed by Opendatacity, these data were visualized and then published at Zeit Online. The result is an impressive graphic that provides highly detailed information about where Malte Spitz was, when and how long he was there, how often he called someone or was called by others, how many SMSs he wrote and how much time he spent online. Combined with his Tweets and blog entries, this data coalesces into a comprehensive picture of what Malte Spitz was up to.

Surveillance Awareness Database (SAD) / Vienna University of Technology (AT) / http://lex.iguw.tuwien.ac.at:9999/site/map/

The Surveillance Awareness Database is a social media project by Vienna University of Technology students Sarah Naber and Alexander Kraicsich that aims to show how widespread video surveillance of public spaces has become. The two undergrads launched a website to which users can upload photos of surveillance cameras including the installation's geographical coordinates. The result is a digital map showing the precise location and a picture of several hundred video cameras (including portions of the Linz video surveillance network.)

Europe vs. Facebook / http://europe-v-facebook.org/DE/de.html

The Europe vs. Facebook initiative confronts the world's largest social network with four primary demands: More transparency as far as the use of personal data is concerned; opt-in instead of opt-out, which means that users shouldn't have to act to prevent publication of their data but rather give their permission for what would, by default, be prohibited; genuine control over the user's own data, which friends have been able to reveal to Facebook up to now; as well as data minimization in order to prevent the accumulation over time of enormous quantities of digital rubbish. Moreover, Europe vs. Facebook finds it unacceptable that the social network stores certain data forever and withholds from users the possibility of expunging them.

Did you know? / http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cL9Wu2kWwSY

"Did you know" is an impressive video with a cool, clean, minimalist style. Its subject: the social, political and economic effects of accelerating technological development. All that's displayed on-screen are statistical statements that say something important about our constantly changing global reality—for instance, that China is about to become the country with the most English-speaking inhabitants, that the 10 jobs most in-demand in 2010 hadn't even existed six years before, and that if the MySpace social network were a country, it would be the world's fifth largest.

Twistori / http://twistori.com/#i_love

I love the word "what if" – I hate being up so early – I think he maybe missed me a teeny bit … – I believe my 30's will be better than my 20's – I feel pretty great starting off this week. I honestly think I'm finally on track to happiness & bliss! – I wish I could hug them and say bless you … "Twistori" is a very simple Twitter tool that gives you an impression of what people throughout the world love, hate, think, believe, feel and wish for. Thousands of Tweets are scanned in real time; those that contain such terms as love, hate or think are captured and displayed in the style of a LIVE Ticker.

Good morning / http://blog.blprnt.com/blog/blprnt/goodmorning

On the basis of more than 11,000 good-morning Tweets variously colored according to the time of day when they were sent, "GoodMorning!" presents a multihued visualization of the varying intensity of the use of Twitter in different parts of the world.

Data Dealer / http://www.datadealer.net/

Collecting, sorting, collating and marketing information has long since become a big business. "Data Dealer" is an online game that aims to make people aware of this. The object is for players to collect as much info as possible about private users and then sell it at a profit to all sorts of enterprises.