

Web users seen as largely unprotected from privacy

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A survey released on the eve of important government hearings on Web privacy suggests computer users are extremely vulnerable to cyberspace spying and other personal intrusions by Internet businesses.

The results could help frame one of the most fundamental debates in the evolution of the Internet as a commercial marketplace: whether the industry can police itself or the government must step in to protect millions of personal-computer users.

Starting Tuesday, the Federal Trade Commission will hold unusually broad hearings in response to complaints by pri-

vacy advocates that personal information is gathered and used by online operators without user consent or knowledge.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center, a nonprofit consumer group participating in the talks, released its survey in a pre-emptive volley ahead of the Washington hearings. The group provided the results to The Associated Press Sunday in advance of a planned release Monday.

The survey found that of the Internet's 100 most popular Web sites, about half collect personal information from users who click on their sites or through mailing lists and other means.

Only 17 sites even mention the privacy

issue, and most of those fell far short of what the group considered adequate disclosure — explaining why information is collected, how it will be used, and what steps will be taken to limit improper use.

"The industry is urging self-policing, but there is no indication that Web sites today are doing anything toward that," said David Sobel, the center's legal counsel.

Some of the surveyed sites explain privacy policies in ambiguous language. For example, Amazon.com, a major online seller of books, tells users it does not rent or sell its mailing list. But it adds that users should send an e-mail to make sure this doesn't happen, the surveyors said.

Of the 100 sites, only eight gave users some control over whether the Web site could share the personal information with others.

On the positive side, the surveyors noted that some sites, such as CNN's online service, don't collect any information about Web users. This type of anonymity was touted by the group as a main way for the Internet to retain the privacy of surfers.

"There is a lot of anonymity ... which is the defacto way privacy is protected," said Marc Rotenberg, director of the privacy information center. "Some people who think they are surfing the Net are actually swimming in a fish bowl. It's a little uncomfortable once you realize that."

Jobs: University will save money and reorganize departments

■ Continued from Page 1A
than a hundred personnel — some who have been here for more than 15 years — Clark said this will not negatively affect the University.

Rather, this is an opportunity for departments to reorganize, and it could save the University money because new employees can be hired at a lower pay, she said.

Helen Stoop, a benefits administrator, said the University will lose valuable experience with the retiring of these employees, but overall, this is a positive move because it allows the University to reallocate jobs and hire employees with technological backgrounds.

Mary Hudzikiewicz, assistant dean of student life, has been a

part of this University for about 38 years, save a few years at other jobs. She began here as a student and now is in charge of the honor societies, University Day, graduation ceremonies and basically every facet of student life.

"I am going to miss working with the students," Hudzikiewicz said. "I think the college-age is the most enjoyable because over two or three years I see the changes they make and their abilities grow."

Hudzikiewicz, under the retirement incentive package, is opting to continue working at the University 600 hours a year while spending the rest of her time volunteering and doing "things I haven't had the chance to do," she said.

"I do bleed green and yellow,"

Hudzikiewicz said. "And the University of Oregon will always be a major part of my life, but it is going to change. I will have the opportunity to volunteer my time in other parts of the University."

Margo Ramsing, an international student advisor, has been a part of the University for 12 years and is also opting to continue working 600 hours a year as part of the package.

Ramsing has started such programs as the Friendship Family, which provides friendship and hospitality to international students when they arrive at the University.

She said during her time at the University, technology has made it much easier to communicate, and in addition she has seen much growth in the international

education and exchange program.

"This program offers the University an international campus," Ramsing said. "It is an opportunity for students to learn about cultures and interact with people from all over the world."

Ramsing said she sees the retirement of so many people as a "change where much tradition will be lost. But in the process, new people will come in and new traditions will be made."

Dwyer said the loss of people who have been here for so long will greatly affect the University. "I don't see how it can help but be a tremendous impact," she said. "There is a big bank of knowledge that will be gone and I wonder who these people who have been here for such a short time will turn to with their questions."

Stoop, who works in Human Resources, does not deny that knowledge will be lost with the retiring of over 100 people, but emphasizes the benefits outweigh possible negative aspects.

This is a possible chance for the University to save money by hiring employees on the lower end of the pay scale, Clark said. And this is also a chance for each department to reorganize.

Clark emphasized that this retirement package was only offered for this year, and said she knows of no plans to offer another one like it soon. This means it is uncertain whether the amount of retirees will remain at this level or drop back to the standard level now that the incentives will not be available.



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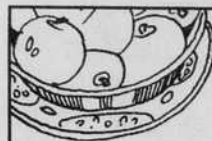


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