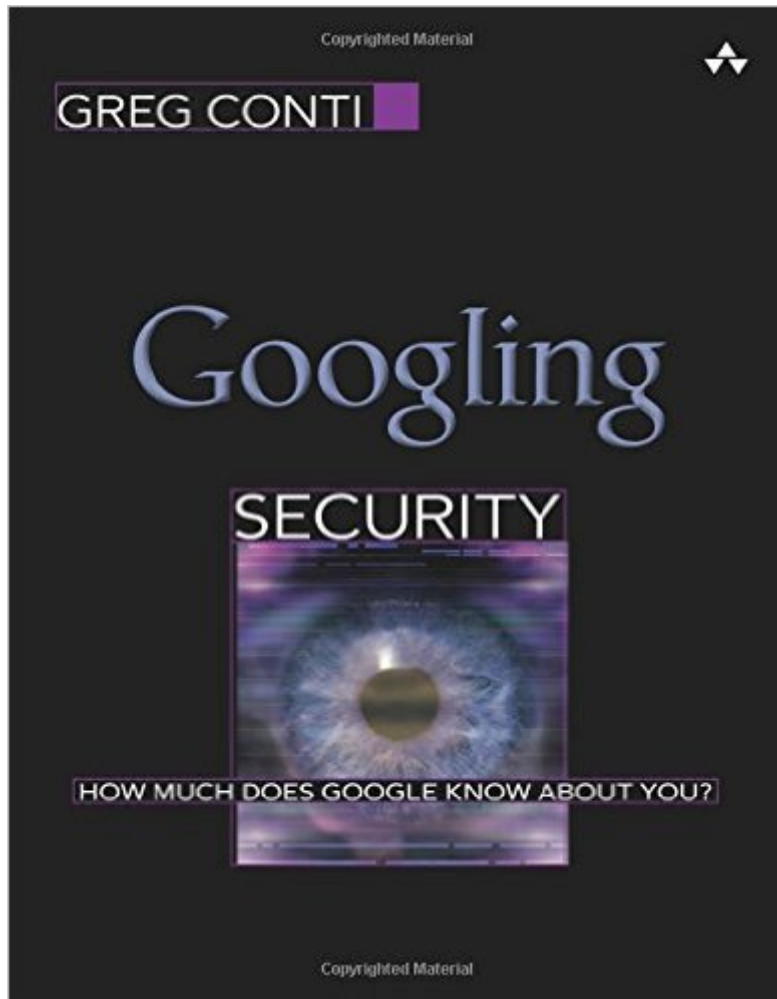


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Googling Security: How Much Does Google Know About You?



Synopsis

What Does Google Know about You? And Who Are They Telling? When you use Google's free services, you pay, big time with personal information about yourself. Google is making a fortune on what it knows about you and you may be shocked by just how much Google does know. Googling Security is the first book to reveal how Google's vast information stockpiles could be used against you or your business and what you can do to protect yourself. Unlike other books on Google hacking, this book covers information you disclose when using all of Google's top applications, not just what savvy users can retrieve via Google's search results. West Point computer science professor Greg Conti reveals the privacy implications of Gmail, Google Maps, Google Talk, Google Groups, Google Alerts, Google's new mobile applications, and more. Drawing on his own advanced security research, Conti shows how Google's databases can be used by others with bad intent, even if Google succeeds in its pledge of "don't be evil." Uncover the trail of informational "bread crumbs" you leave when you use Google search How Gmail could be used to track your personal network of friends, family, and acquaintances How Google's map and location tools could disclose the locations of your home, employer, family and friends, travel plans, and intentions How the information stockpiles of Google and other online companies may be spilled, lost, taken, shared, or subpoenaed and later used for identity theft or even blackmail How the Google AdSense and DoubleClick advertising services could track you around the Web How to systematically reduce the personal information you expose or give away This book is a wake-up call and a "how-to" self-defense manual: an indispensable resource for everyone, from private citizens to security professionals, who relies on Google. Preface xiii Acknowledgments xix About the Author xxi Chapter 1: Googling 1 Chapter 2: Information Flows and Leakage 31 Chapter 3: Footprints, Fingerprints, and Connections 59 Chapter 4: Search 97 Chapter 5: Communications 139 Chapter 6: Mapping, Directions, and Imagery 177 Chapter 7: Advertising and Embedded Content 205 Chapter 8: Googlebot 239 Chapter 9: Countermeasures 259 Chapter 10: Conclusions and a Look to the Future 299 Index 317

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It has been suggested that if one was somehow able to change history so that aspirin had never been discovered until now, it would have died in the lab and stand no chance of FDA approval. In a report from the Manhattan Institute, they write that no modern drug development organization would touch it. Similarly, if we knew the power that Google would have in 2008 with its ability to aggregate and correlate personal data, it is arguable that various regulatory and privacy bodies would never allow it to exist given the extensive privacy issues. In a fascinating and eye-opening new book *Googling Security: How Much Does Google Know About You?*, author Greg Conti explores the many security risks around Google and other search engines. Part of the problem is that in the rush to get content onto the web, organizations often give short shrift to the security and privacy of their data. At the individual level, those who make use of the innumerable and ever expanding amount of Google free services can end up paying for those services with their personal information being compromised, or shared in ways they would not truly approve of; but implicitly do so via their acceptance of the Google Terms of Service. While the book focuses specifically on Google, the security issues detailed are just as relevant to Yahoo, MSN, AOL, Ask and the more than 50 other search engines. Until now, Google and security have often not been used together. As an example, my friend and SEO guru Shimon Sandler has a blog around search engine optimization (SEO). In the over three years that his blog has been around, my recent post on *The Need for Security in SEO* was the first on topic of SEO security. Similar SEO blogs also have a very low number (and often no) articles on SEO and security.

In buying this book on , and leaving a review on , the net knows that much more about me. This book addresses one of those game theory scenarios, where what's good for the collective (maximum data) is bad for the individual (loss of privacy). The rational response is to let everyone else fully disclose and capitalize on that, while maintaining your own privacy. I probably knew most

of the material in this book beforehand, being in tech, but its unlikely I can abide by the recommendations. My Google RSS Reader is loaded up with 100+ feeds, some of which spool up 100 articles per day. Google Calender is best of breed. And Google Email offers POP/IMAP for free, whereas Yahoo email does not. All three of these "killer apps" work best when logged in continuously. So I login from home and work, and they stay logged in 24x7. As a result, whenever something pops in my head, and I do a search, Google is able to track that, and tie that to my name because my name is tied to my email. I may switch to NewsGator or Bloglines, and go back to Yahoo email/ Calender. And I may code up something on my linux firewall to switch its MAC / IP address on a weekly basis. And I may ditch my Grandcentral, with the cost that I will have to give out my real cell phone number to merchants. But I probably won't. I was able to muster a small pyrrhic victory, and steer clear of the G1 (google) phone. Which is integrated tightly with Google, such connecting with a Gmail address, and all the contacts associated with that email address. Also, re. chaffing countermeasure, with Firefox TrackMeNot is interesting. I tried that out sometime back, and had it cranked up to some number of queries per minute.

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