

Google Has Your Data: Should You Be Afraid?

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has become a corporate media conglomerate focused on generating revenue by incessantly pushing advertisements at its users. Now, corporate Google is bent on monetizing every user through keeping a careful watch on every Web page users access and every file users open on local machines.

With one of the most efficient and widely used search systems today, Google's computers crawl the Internet, sucking up every imaginable type of information available on Web sites everywhere.

Its free search products let users find this information quickly. Its desktop search toolbar extends Google's search capabilities to catalogued listings of hard drives for near instant searches for local data. In addition, Google reads users' private e-mail sent through its Gmail service and private e-mail stored on users' hard drives through its desktop-search software.

All this has turned Google into one of the largest global corporate entities, and it has begun to raise red flags among privacy advocates. According to Harold Krent, a professor and dean at Chicago-Kent College of Law, the big question is whether Google marries users' names to the aggregate data it accumulates.

If the information gathered about users was not disseminated to other business entities, privacy concerns might not be so critical. But Google, in its privacy policy, hints strongly that it uses the data it collects.

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