

The piracy of online privacy

PAUL SMALERA

ONLINE privacy doesn't exist. It was lost years ago. And not only was it taken, we've all already gotten used to it. Loss of privacy is a fundamental tradeoff at the very core of social networking. Our privacy has been taken in service of the social tools we so crave and suddenly cannot live without. If not for the piracy of privacy, Facebook wouldn't exist. Nor would Twitter. Nor even would Gmail, Foursquare, Groupon, Zynga, etc.

And yet people keep fretting about losing what's already gone. This week, like most others of the past decade, has brought fresh new outrages for privacy advocates. Google, which a few weeks ago changed its privacy policy to allow the company to share your personal data across as many as 60 of its products, was again castigated this week for the changes. Except this time, the shouts came in the form of a lawsuit. The Electronic Privacy Information Center sued the FTC to compel it to block Google's changes, saying they violated a privacy agreement Google signed less than a year ago.

Elsewhere, social photography app Path was caught storing users' entire iPhone address books on their servers and have issued a red-faced apology. (The lesser-known app Hipster committed the same sin and also offered a mea culpa.) And Facebook's IPO has brought fresh concerns that Mark Zuckerberg will find creative new ways to leverage user data into ever more desirable revenue-generating products.

This is the way we're private now. It's ludicrous for anyone who loves the Internet to expect otherwise. How else are these services supposed to exist let alone make any money? Theft or misuse of private user data is a crime, certainly. But no social web app not one can work without intense



People wear masks during the "Freiheit Statt Angst" (Freedom instead of Fear) protest calling for the protection of digital data privacy in Berlin on September 10, 2011. The masks were handed out by the organisers who asked participants of the rally to wear them for the media to symbolise what call the individual's right to remain anonymous on the internet.

PHOTO: REUTERS

analytics performed on the huge data sets that users provide to them voluntarily (you did read the terms of service agreement...right?).

And the issue compounds when people connect one site to another. By linking their Twitter to their Facebook to their Google+ to their Foursquare to their Zynga to their Instagram to their iOS, users are consolidating their lives, and in the process making them more attractive to marketers. While Facebook, Twitter and other services have made attempts to warn users about hitting the "connect" button, many of us hit that button with reckless abandon, without a thought of who's slaving on the other side.

The reason social media and digital information companies want that data is because of what we refuse to give them: money. No one wants to pay for the privilege of chatting with their friends or using a coupon, and to this day, no one

has to: Go ahead, ring their doorbell or pick up the free coupon book from your front stoop. But if you want to chat using Facebook or Gmail, or you want to buy a Groupon for an 80 percent-off Botox service, you will have to tell those companies who you are. And those companies will use that information to tailor their offerings to you, increasing your value as a user and a customer. They will slice their data sets into a million different pieces and show those pieces to people advertisers who will pay them money for the privilege of using their service. They'll use it to get to you.

This is an update on an old media model. Magazines and newspapers for decades could only guess at the readership of their product and the demographic of their customers. But now social and new media demand to and can know exactly who you are before they

agree to let you use their free services. Even email newsletter services like the increasingly hot Thrillist which might innocuously start you on their service by asking only for your simple email address deploy click trackers, pixel trackers and other online data-gathering techniques to start to put together a picture of you as a user, both individually and in aggregate. A deceased magazine like Spy could only dream of that kind of intel.

Without such strategies, social web companies like these couldn't exist. Every user has a choice when it comes to privacy, sure. But the second people sign up for Gmail, Facebook, Mint or Gilt Group, they have reaffirmed their willingness to be a mouse that the cats will chase. And these cats need mice. Otherwise they will starve. So they do their best to hide their intentions. Indeed, as a longtime and well-known advocate for the

transformative power of technology recently told me, true believers like Mark Zuckerberg actively stake out radical positions on privacy, then talk about them as if they were natural or normal. It's not too much different from the political process, where the best way to effect a shift in society is to present it as if it were a fait accompli and then expend energy actually moving the levers of power toward the shift rather than wasting time arguing with people about the implications.

That's what the last five years have been about. Mark Zuckerberg, for example, wanted a collection of all our Facebook actions called an Open Graph to be part of our lives. Now, lo and behold, it is.

Today, we straddle two extremes the offline and the online. Each comes with its own expectations and realities of what privacy is.

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The author writes for the Reuters.

Mobile devices to outnumber people on planet this year

Smartphones and tablets. It appears that we can't get enough of them. According to the latest research by network firm Cisco, at some point this year there will be more mobile devices on the planet than humans. So that'll be about 7 billion then.

But it won't stop there. Consumers will go on consuming, with those in emerging markets getting connected in ever greater numbers. Many people will soon be carrying with them not just a smartphone, but a tablet too. In fact, Cisco predicts that by 2016 there will be more than 10 billion mobile-connected devices among an expected world population of some 7.3 billion people. Tech companies will be salivating at the very thought. Of course, such proliferation will bring with it a set of challenges that'll need to be dealt with in a timely manner or else the entire mobile communications system will be in danger of simply seizing up. The more mobile devices there are, the more pressure there'll be on mobile networks, and the companies operating them.

Faster networks

Faster networks will also create a challenge. According to Cisco, 4G currently only accounts for 0.2 percent of mobile connections but is responsible for 6 percent of mobile data traffic. Furthermore, a 4G connection generates 28 times more data traffic than a non-4G connection, Cisco said. So if the next iteration of Apple's



expected-soon iPad supports 4G, as some have suggested it will, that'll help push data usage even higher. Cisco predicted that by the end of this year, 100 million smartphone users will belong to what it calls the 'gigabyte club', with users generating more than 1GB of mobile data traffic each month. And over the next four years, that figure will fly off the charts. "By 2016, 60 percent of mobile users three billion people worldwide will belong to the gigabyte club," Suraj Shetty, vice-president of products and solutions at Cisco, told the BBC.

Tablets

The huge popularity of tablets, a device which only came into being two years ago with the launch of Apple's iPad, is also helping to ramp up data consumption, with those devices generating three times more traffic than smartphones. Cisco says that by 2016 tablets will be responsible for over 10 percent of global mobile traffic. While manufacturers of mobile phones and tablets will be rubbing their hands in eager anticipation of the possible riches that await them in the coming years, one question remains: In 2016, which maker will be dominating the mobile market? Apple? Samsung? Or a company we haven't even heard of yet?

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Digital Trends

Apple testing smaller screen tablet: WSJ

AFP, Washington

APPLE is testing a tablet computer with a smaller screen than the hot-selling iPad, The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

The newspaper, quoting unidentified people familiar with the situation, said the California gadget-maker was working with component suppliers in Asia to test the tablet computer with a smaller display.

The Journal quoted officials at Apple suppliers as saying the company has shown them screen designs for a device with an eight-inch (20.3-centimeter) display.

The iPad has a 9.7-inch (24.6-cm) screen. Apple has sold more than 55 million iPads since launching the device in April 2010.

The Journal said Apple was working with Taiwan's AU Optronics Co. and South Korea's LG Display Co. to supply the test panels.

The newspaper cautioned that Apple frequently works with suppliers to test new designs and "could opt not to proceed with the device."

Apple reportedly plans to unveil a new version of the iPad in the first week of March. According to the Journal, the "iPad 3" will have a higher resolution screen than the iPad 2 but will be the same size.

Both Amazon and Samsung offer smaller and lower-priced tablets than the iPad.

Apple's late co-founder Steve Jobs once famously dismissed tablets smaller than the iPad saying they were "tweeners" that were "too big to compete with a smartphone and too small to compete with an iPad."

He suggested in October 2010 that makers of seven-inch (17.8-cm) screens "include sandpaper so users can sand down their fingers" to be able to tap onscreen keys.



Telesar V

TECHPHOTO

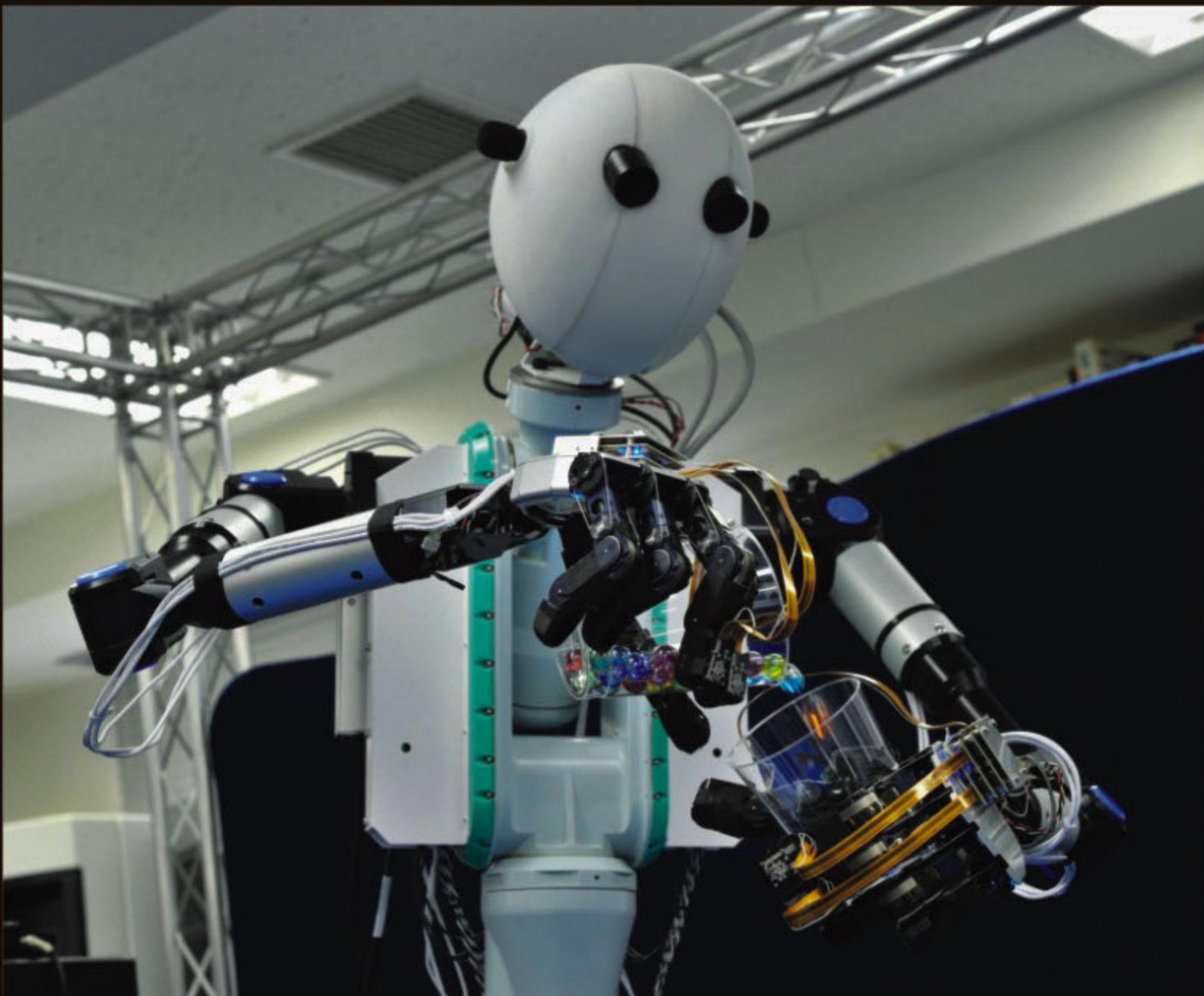


PHOTO: AFP

A master-slave robot "Telesar V", developed by Keio University's Graduate School of Media Design professor Susumu Tachi (unseen in this picture) transfers marbles from a cup to another cup for a demonstration at Tachi's laboratory in Yokohama, suburban Tokyo on February 8. The robot that mimics the movements of its human controller is bringing the Hollywood blockbuster "Avatar" one step closer to reality. Users of the Telesar V don special gear that allows them not only to direct the actions of a remote machine, but also to see, hear and feel the same things as their doppelganger android.

Softexpo 2012 kicks off Feb 22

IT & TELECOM DESK

ALL is set for the SoftExpo 2012, the largest exposition of software and ICT enabled services (ITES), to be held on February 22-26 in the capital.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) is organising the event at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The theme for this year's softexpo's is 'Empowering Next Generation'.

Over 140 exhibitors are taking part at the event with participation of 10 countries. There will be 30 seminars

BASIS
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Feb 22-26, BICC | www.softexpo.com.bd

and technical sessions at the 5-day fair.

Organisers are expecting huge crowd at the fair.

Code Warriors' Challenge, IT Innovation Search Programme, BASIS

Freelancer of the year award, IT job fair and the gala award night would be the highlights of the SoftExpo.

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