A FIRST LOOK AT DIGITAL SECURITY

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This Access Now booklet was created by Kim Burton and Anqi Li.

Access Now is an international organization that defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining innovative policy, user engagement, and direct technical support, we fight for open and secure communications for all.

For more information or assistance, please contact **info@accessnow.org**. For digital security assistance, contact **help@accessnow.org** or visit **https://www.accessnow.org/help**

This booklet is made to help identify what you might have to protect in your digital world. Read in its entirety, you will find each persona has characteristics you may share, or fears you have heard before. These cartoon animals are not made to be the focus; it is the threats they face and solutions they suggest that are important.

We present here only the beginning of the conversation: a place to start. If you are interested in implementing the solutions, or want to ask questions about your personal context and challenges, contact the **Access Now Digital Security Helpline** at **help@accessnow.org**, or visit the resources listed on the back of the book.
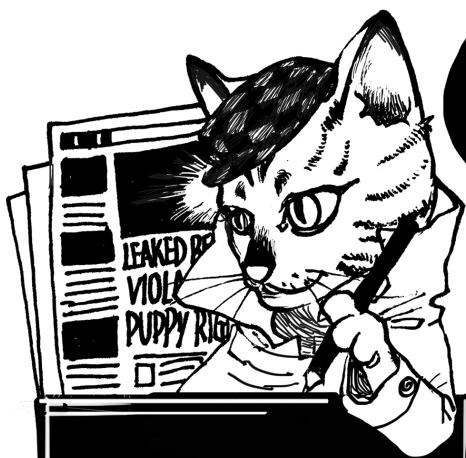
SAVANT, THE JOURNALIST

* Savant's preferred gender pronoun is she/her/hers.

WHAT NEEDS PROTECTING?

Savant is a journalist communicating with survivors of puppy mills. Savant's sources have secret information about a mill that has the chance to shut it down. Shady characters have already attempted to find out what information that is, so now Savant takes care that all of her **communications are encrypted**, and when she collaborates on an article, she uses **encrypted document sharing** options as well.

1 Sources: names, communications, and contact

2 Correspondence with the editors

3 Time-sensitive research

4 Draft documents and articles, sometimes involving collaborators

Savant relies heavily on her phone for on-the-go communication. She constantly collaborates with others on future articles and documents. Savant is known for taking on stories that question the status quo, and she has no shortage of powerful people interested in that work.

To mitigate these vulnerabilities:

Savant **encrypts emails** to sources from her laptop ensuring the confidentiality of the messages.
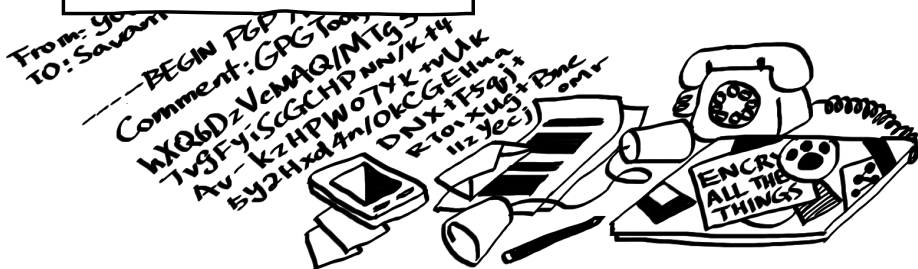
For chatting on a laptop or desktop, Savant uses an **encrypted instant messenger and voice client**.

She uses **encrypted texting and voice apps** on her phone to connect with sources.

Her collaboration work is done through **encrypted document sharing**.

When on shared or untrusted wifi (like a cafe), Savant uses a **Virtual Private Network (VPN)** to securely access the internet.

When moving through security checkpoints, she turns off her computer to ensure **full-disk encryption** is active.

From: yo
TO: Savan
-BEGIN PGP
Comment: GPGTool
hXQ6DzVcMAQ/MTG
TvgFyiSCGCHPNN/K t4
Av- kzHPWoTYK mUk
5y2Hxd4n/0kCGEHaa
DNX1P5qj+
R101Xugj+Bmk
omr
112 yecj

ENCR
ALL THE
THINGS

WHAT NEEDS PROTECTING?

Maya is an activist and blogger who calls attention to the effect of rising ocean temperatures on coast-dwelling penguins. Not everyone agrees with Maya's work, and their* **online accounts are often at risk** of hacking and defacement.

Recently, tensions have increased and Maya is concerned about someone stealing their devices. They have decided to **encrypt all hard drives to better ensure the safety of their information**.

1
Research and data, contained on hard drives

2
Online accounts

3
Communications with other activists

MAYA,
THE ACTIVIST

*Maya's preferred gender pronoun is they/them/their.

Carefully cultivated over years of work, Maya's online social media accounts and blog are their life. Their integrity is of the utmost importance to them, their readers, and their contacts. Important research, data, and plans are kept on Maya's hard drives, and they fear that they could fall into unfriendly hands.

To mitigate these vulnerabilities:

All of their online accounts are guarded by **two-factor authentication.**

Maya ensures all of their devices have **full-disk encryption** enabled.

Maya keeps track of what computers have accessed their accounts, and from where, with the **security checkups** offered by Google and Facebook.

They **encrypt all sensitive files, including external media**, like flash drives and hard drives.

Strong passwords are employed on all accounts: over 30 characters, all unique, with numbers and special characters managed with a **Password Manager**.

Maya **expands short urls** they find on social media in order to know in advance where links are going to take them.

They employ **anonymous chat** to organize events and gatherings.

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JULÍO, THE CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDER

*Julio's preferred gender pronoun is he/him/his.
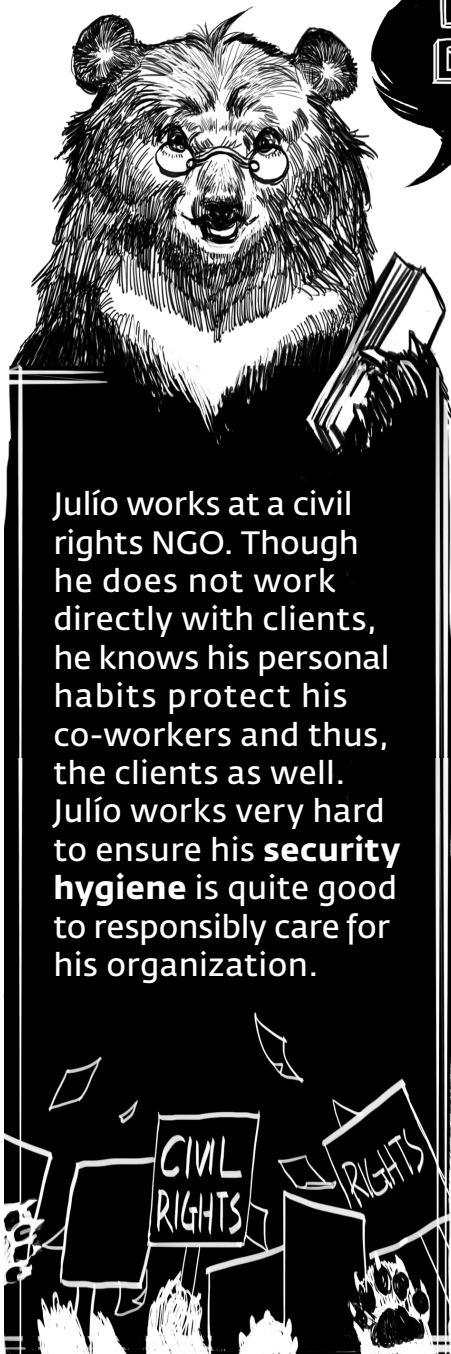
Julío works at a civil rights NGO. Though he does not work directly with clients, he knows his personal habits protect his co-workers and thus, the clients as well. Julío works very hard to ensure his **security hygiene** is quite good to responsibly care for his organization.

WHAT NEEDS PROTECTING?

1 Financial information, both donors and employees

2 Contact lists of partners and clients

3 Integrity and trust the organization has built

4 Private documents, like client statements and advocacy strategies

Julío is vulnerable during his frequent travels due to the unprotected wifi, border checks, and multiple hotels he stays in. He has an open and helpful nature which may make him trust too quickly. His organization is widely known for its work, and he is their public face, often being contacted by strangers for assistance or advice.

To mitigate these vulnerabilities:

Julío **keeps software up-to-date**.

When reading email, Julío **uses caution in opening unexpected links or attachments**, unless he has verified the senders' identity by calling or messaging them.

He has a **password manager** where he generates **unique, strong passwords** with over 30 characters, never using words that can be found in dictionaries, but including numbers and special characters.

When crossing country borders, Julío turns off his computer to ensure his **full-disk encryption** is active to prevent unauthorized access to his information.

When on shared or unknown wifi (like a cafe), Julío uses a **Virtual Private Network (VPN)** to create a secure line to the internet.

He remembers what is posted outside of work can hurt the NGO as well. He employs **mindful posting** to ensure what he publishes on his personal accounts cannot be used against him (wary of posting locations, specific dates, home addresses, etc.).
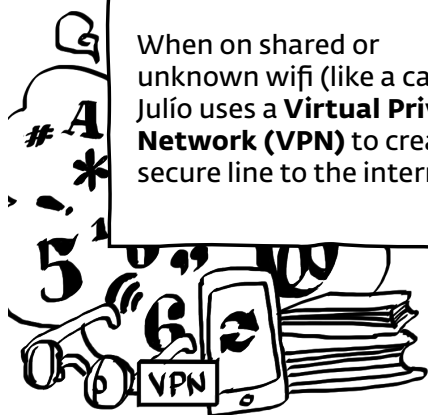
JAHA, THE STUDENT

*Jaha's preferred gender pronoun is she/her/hers.

Jaha is a student in her final year of college. She is interested in being part of a movement that accepts a fly-free lifestyle, a taboo in froggy culture. Many resources on such topics are blocked by the university, and she'd face stigma and suspicion if it was a known interest of hers. Jaha needs to **stay anonymous and keep her browsing private while online**.

WHAT NEEDS PROTECTING?

1 Personal privacy

2 Personal control over identity

3 Access to free flow of information

4 Separation of online personas

Jaha does not want her family, or many of her social circle, to know her interests yet. She wants the freedom to explore this possible new side of herself without feeling watched and judged by others. Maya has created a separate self online and does not want to risk public exposure until she is ready, but she still wants to access some material the university has censored.

To mitigate these vulnerabilities:

Jaha employs **circumvention and anonymity tools** to confuse her identity and avoid censorship.

Anonymous chat lets Jaha connect with others like her.

She uses **privacy enhancing browser extensions** to avoid ad-tracking which may reveal some of her interests.

She maintains **separate online personas** to divide her personal life from her academic life, taking special care to avoid being identifiable.

Jaha regularly **clears out her chat histories** to avoid malicious access to previous conversation logs.

Jaha employs **mindful postin**g to ensure what she publishes online cannot be traced back to her (wary of posting locations, specific dates, home addresses, etc.).
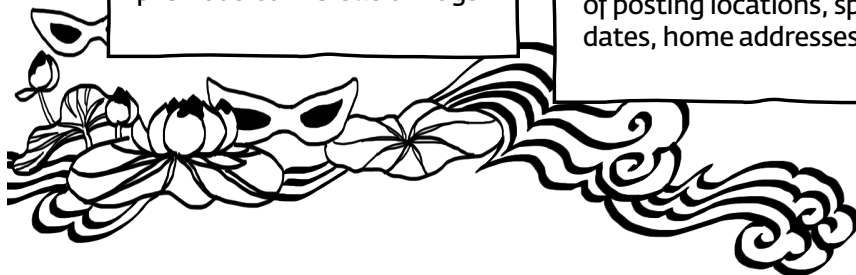
RESOURCES
TO HELP YOU IMPLEMENT
PRACTICES LISTED IN THIS BOOK:

https://ssd.eff.org
https://securityinabox.org

WANT MORE PERSONALIZED
ASSISTANCE?

The Digital Security Helpline is a free of charge resource for civil society around the world. It is run by the international human rights organization Access Now (accessnow.org).

The Helpline offers real-time, direct technical assistance and advice to activists, independent media, and civil society organizations.

OUR SERVICES

- Rapid response on digital security incidents
- Personalized recommendations, instructions, and follow-up on digital security issues
- Guidance on the usage of digital security tools
- Support for securing technical infrastructure, websites, and social media against attacks
- Supported languages include English, Spanish, Arabic, French, Russian, German, Filipino, and Portuguese.

HOW TO REACH US

✉ **help@accessnow.org**

Download our GPG public key: **hkps.pool.sks-keyservers.net**
Our GPG public key ID: **0x32E8A2BC**
GPG public key fingerprint: **6CE6 221C 98EC F399 A04C 41B8 C46B ED33 32E8 A2BC**

HTTPS **accessnow.org/help**

DIGITAL SECURITY HELPLINE
access now