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From: ld231782@longs.lance.colostate.edu (L. Detweiler)

Newsgroups: alt.privacy,alt.privacy.anon-server,alt.answers,news.answers

Subject: Anonymity on the Internet FAQ (2 of 4)

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ANONYMITY on the INTERNET

=========================

Compiled by L. Detweiler <ld231782@longs.lance.colostate.edu>.

<3.1> What is the value or use of anonymity?

<3.2> Does anonymity uphold or violate the Usenet status quo?

<3.3> Is anonymity conducive or neutral to `abuse'?

<3.4> Does anonymity require courage or cowardice?

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<3.6> Should anonymous postings be censored?

<3.7> Can restrictions on anonymity be enforced? (How?)

<3.8> What are the effects of anonymity?

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.1> What is the value or use of anonymity?

David Clunie <dclunie@pax.tpa.com.au>:

> Many seem to question the value of anonymity. But who are they to

> say what risks another individual should take ? There is no

> question that in this rather conservative society that we live

> in, holding certain views, making certain statements, adopting a

> certain lifestyle, are likely to result in public censure,

> ridicule, loss of status, employment, or even legal action. Given

> the heterogeneity of the legal jurisdictions from where the many

> contributors to usenet post, who knows what is legal and what is

> not ! Some say that anonymous posters are "cowards" and should

> stand up and be counted. Perhaps that is one point of view but

> what right do these detractors have to exercise such censorship ?

Doug Sewell <doug@cc.ysu.edu>:

> Why is it censorship to not expect someone to speak for

> themselves, without the cloak of anonymity. This is at best a

> lame argument.

>

> You tell me why what you have to say requires anonymity. And you

> tell me why the wishes of a majority of non-anonymous users of a

> newsgroup should be disregarded when they don't want anonymous

> posts.

>

> Anonymous users have LESS rights than any others. They are not

> legitimate usenet participants. I would not honor RFDs, CFVs,

> control messages, or votes from one.

Bill Bohrer <bohrer@maui.mcc.com>:

> What really galls me is that you don't mention legitimate,

> RESPONSIBLE uses of anonymity.

Evan Leibovitch <evan@telly.on.ca>:

> Yes. They exist. They compose of a small fraction of the Usenet

> community, yet the moves so far to accomodate them have caused as

> much grief and hurt as they have prevented.

>

> The need for a certain amount of discretion on some groups on

> Usenet exists, just like with letters to the editor, you can

> retain anonymity if you request but the \*editors\* must have your

> name and address on file.

Bob Longo <longo@sfpp.com>:

> If someone does not have enough conviction in his beliefs to post

> them without hiding behind an anonymous service, maybe he

> shouldn't be making the post.

>

> Sorry, but it appears that people are uniting against anonymous

> posting - not for it.

Dave Hayes <dave@jato.jpl.nasa.gov>:

> I beg to differ.

>

> Where have you been? We've been arguing this for weeks. There are

> two sides that it boils down to:

>

> "The validity of concepts and ideas expressed are based upon the

> poster's identity"

>

> "The validity of concepts and ideas expressed are not related to

> the poster's identity"

Ed Hall <edhall@rand.org>:

> That's a false dichotomy. Ideas and concepts should be judged on

> merit, but a component of that merit is just who it is who

> presents those ideas and concepts.

>

> I personally don't see a gross threat to the net in anonymous

> postings, but unless there is a clear reason for anonymity I

> regard them with a great deal more suspicion than average.

>

> I think there is a reasonable middle-ground. Using anonymity to

> protect oneself from actual harm resulting from social

> intolerance is an example of an important and legitimate use.

> But using it simply to put ones opponents at a disadvantage so

> one can attack them with impunity is severely rude, at best.

> Although I don't believe in outlawing rudeness, I see no reason

> to come to its comfort, either.

Karl Barrus <elee9sf@Menudo.UH.EDU>:

> Some argue that the opinions of the people who hide behind a veil

> of anonymity are worthless, and that people should own up to

> their thoughts. I agree with the latter point - in an ideal

> world we would all be sitting around engaging in Socratic

> dialogues, freely exchanging our opinions in an effort to

> learn. But in an ideal world nobody will threaten you for your

> thoughts, or ridicule you.

>

> But we live in a world where the people who don't agree with you

> may try to harm you. Let's face it, some people aren't going to

> agree with your opinion no matter how logically you try to

> present it, or how reasoned out it may be. This is sad since it

> does restrict people from voicing their opinions.

<00acearl@leo.bsuvc.bsu.edu>:

> Instead of making this a "free-er medium" by allowing posters to

> "protect themselves" with anonymity, simply require that all

> posters be prepared to discuss their sources of information and

> take the heat for unsubstantiated dribble. This seems to be the

> way things are currently done;

Melinda Shore <shore@dinah.tc.cornell.edu>:

> It seems obvious to me that anonymity is often a good thing,

> especially in areas where people do have something valid to say

> but have legitimate reasons to fear the consequences if their

> identity is known (and yes, it does happen).

David Toland <det@sw.stratus.com>:

> If someone feels a need to post anonymously, I have no real

> problem with that per se. I may take that fact into account when

> reading some types of subject matter, but I do not make an a

> priori judgement based on it.

>

> Some people will automatically discount an anon posting. Let

> them. Others of us don't care who wrote it (usually), as long as

> it is intelligently presented, or witty, or even amusingly

> unusual.

David Klein <davidh@chaos.cs.brandeis.edu>:

> I have seen pieces of the anon thread for the last two weeks on

> the net, and I do not understand what the big deal is. The pros:

> a person can post to a group with a potentially sensitive subject

> and not have to worry about personal contacts finding out. The

> cons: someone could potentially harass someone.

Mike Schenk <M.R.Schenk@research.ptt.nl>:

> I think the anon server is a blessing to the net. It gives people

> the oppurtunity to post anonymously in the sense that their name

> is not known. However, it is still possible to send email to them

> so you can tell if you dissaprove of a certain posting. So they

> are anonymous but reachable.

J. Kamens <jik@mit.edu>:

> If someone REALLY needs to post a message anonymous in a newsgroup

> in which this usually isn't done, they can usually find someone

> on the net to do this for them. They don't need an automated

> service to do it, and the automated service is by its nature

> incapable of making the judgment call necessary to decide whether

> a particular posting really needs to be anonymous.

Karl Krueger<kkrueg@ukelele.GCR.COM>:

> The existence and continued popularity of an anonymous server

> shows that there is a demand for it. People wish to have the

> ability to avoid getting fired, sued, or shot for expressing

> their opinions.

Bob Longo <longo@sfpp.com>:

> the only person qualified to judge the validity of the anon

> poster's reasons is the anon poster himself. You are very lucky

> that you are secure enough in your social position and career

> that you can say and write whatever you want to any time any

> place without fear of ridicule or censure. Some people aren't.

> Some people just don't wish to tell a few million people around

> the world, or a few dozen at work, etc. details about their

> private lives or some personal opinions or beliefs.

Herbert M Petro <hmpetro@uncc.edu>:

> Perhaps those people should undergo therapy in order to built

> their self-esteem and come to recognize their own self-worth.

> Such people should be pitied for their overwhelming need to be

> approved of by others.

Dr. Cat <cat@wixer.cactus.org>:

> Sure, many people have no need for the useful roles of an anon

> server, and may be subject to some of the harmful ones. But to

> judge solely on the role something plays in one's own life, with

> no consideration for others, seems extremely self-centered.

Richard M. Hartman <hartman@ulogic.UUCP>:

> Most of us have not been saying that anonymous posting should be

> "banished from the net", merely that there should be some minimum

> guaranteed set of controls and accountability. Plus agreement

> (or at least discussion) on where they are appropriate.

John Stanley <stanley@skyking.OCE.ORST.EDU>

> Funny, but there were controls and accountability for

> anon.penet.fi. The admin there had shut off abusive users.

>

> The only problem people had with that is that the accountability

> wasn't under their control.

Brian O'Donovan <not@inmos.co.uk>:

> The benefit of having an anon service is that people are being

> (shall we say) `openly anonymous', which I feel is far more

> healthy than having to forge or abuse an identity. Closing anon

> services will not prevent malicious use of the net.

>

> I'm afraid I cannot offer my services, or those of the company I

> work for, but for what it's worth, you have my support.

<barnhill@kuhub.cc.ukans.edu>:

> The legitimacy of anonymous posting has been presented in a

> variety of ways for at least the last couple of years, debated

> within the groups where such posting occours, and it certainly

> appeared to me that a concensus had arisen that in cases where

> employer retribution, student harrassment, potential

> re-victimization or other considerations pertained, anonymous

> posting was an acceptable way in which to conduct business.

Wes Morgan <morgan@engr.uky.edu>:

> And you say that if you feel strongly enough about it, put your

> name on it. I say, "Until you have something real to lose [Your

> career for life], you will never see the values of being

> anonymous."

E. Johnson <johnson@access.digex.com>:

> Well, I have mixed feelings about this entire question. Of

> course, everyone should have the right to anonymity; if someone

> doesn't want to stand up for what they have said (and I can

> understand that under some circumstances), that is their choice.

> One the other hand, I think the USE of the anon service (not its

> availability) is not a good idea (except maybe on the alt.sex

> hierarchy and similar places) because it does reduce the

> credibility of one's opinion. It seems to say that "I don't

> really know what I'm talking about and I don't care" even if the

> person does.

Ingemar Hulthage <hulthage@morue.usc.edu>:

> I think it would be a big mistake to prohibit anonymous posting

> and email in general. There are some long-standing precedences

> for anonymous publishing. Many authors use pen-names and there

> are cases where the real identity of an author is still secret or

> remained secret for a long time. Most newspapers publish

> 'letters to the editor' and allow them to be anonymous or signed

> by initials only. The responsibility of a journalist not to

> reveal his sources is almost universally recognized. In the

> academic world one can point to the custom of anonymous peer

> reviews of articles, proposals etc.

[unknown]

> "Revolutions are not won by people sitting in a back room plotting

> and scheming. They are won by those that are willing to take

> personal risk and publicly speak out against what they deem

> unjust."

"somebody":

> I am a firm believer in privacy, but that is not the same thing as

> anonymity. Anonymity can be used to violate another's privacy.

> For instance, in recent years, I have had harassing anonymous

> notes and phone calls threatening XXX beause of things I have

> said on the net ... I am in favor of defeating the reasons

> people need anonymity, not giving the wrong-doers another

> mechanism to use to harass others.

>

> ... any such service is a case of willingness to sacrifice some

> amount of privacy of the recipients to support the privacy of the

> posters.

>

> If the only people who would support the idea are those who might

> use it, is it proper?

John Stanley <stanley@skyking.OCE.ORST.EDU>:

> I think you would be hard pressed to prove that the only people

> who support anonymous posting are those who use it.

Richard E. Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu>:

> Most of us have the best interests of the net in mind, agree that

> anonymous postings have their place, and agree that cooperative

> anarchy is a wonderful experiment.

Jonathan Eifrig <eifrig@beanworld.cs.jhu.edu>:

> Let's face it: we are \_all\_ anonymous to some degree on the Net.

Matthew P Wiener <weemba@sagi.wistar.upenn.edu>:

> I've usually taken at least lurking interest in USENET-gone-stupid

> flame wars, but this anonymity flap leaves me completely bored.

> Is it just me, or is there something fundamentally boring going

> on?

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.2> Does anonymity uphold or violate the Usenet status quo?

Brad Templeton <brad@clarinet.com>:

> I can think of no disadvantage caused by anon posting sites that

> doesn't already exist, other than the fact that they do make more

> naive net users who don't know how to post anonymously the old

> way more prone to do it.

<an8729@anon.penet.fi>:

> Anonymity does hinder some methods of controlling other posters'

> actions. People who seek such control will naturally oppose it.

Dan Hoey <hoey@zogwarg.etl.army.mil>:

> While there has never been any real security against anonymous or

> forged postings on Usenet, the process has until now been

> sufficiently inconvenient, error-prone, and undocumented to limit

> its use by persons who have not learned the culture of the net.

Alexander EICHENER <C96@vm.urz.uni-heidelberg.de>:

> anonymous posting has not created major problems aside from

> angering irate people (like you?) who would rather ban

> anonymous/pseudonymous posting altogether because "real men can

> stand up for what they said" or comparable puerile arguments as

> others have brought up.

Terry McGonigal <terry@geovision.gvc.com>:

> <sigh>... Just how many anon services are needed? Will

> \*everybody\* start running one soon? What's the purpose? Who

> stands to benefit when there are N anon services, then 2\*N, then

> N^2, out there. Where \*has\* this sudden fasination with anon

> services come from?

>

> For better or (IMHO) worse, it looks like we'er gonna get stuck

> with these things, and as much as I don't like the idea (of

> services like this becoming the norm) I don't really think

> there's much to be done since it's obvious that anyone who wants

> to can set one up with a bit of work.

<an8785@anon.penet.fi>:

> Is the problem that some are used to "punishing" posters who are

> upsetting in some vague way by complaining to the (usually

> acquiescent) sysadmin or organizations that the poster belongs

> to? That surely is the most gutless approach to solving

> problems, but my experience on the net shows that the same users

> who vilify anonymous postings are the first to write obsessively

> detailed grievances to the poster's supervisor when his or her

> tranquility is disturbed by some "intrusive" or subversive post

> or another.

>

> Anonymous postings prevent just this kind of intimidation.

Steve Pope <spp@zabriskie.berkeley.edu>:

> I am finding this bias against pseudonymity boring. Our friend

> posting through penet has a point. The old guard would like to

> keep their network the way it always has been... and this new

> thing, these pseudonymous servers, cuts into their turf. So they

> whine and bitch about it, and every time there's the slightest

> abuse (such as somebody's .sig being too long), they try to

> parlay that into an argument against pseudonymity.

>

> I'll go on record as saying: three cheers for the admins at anon

> servers like penet, pax, and n7kbt... and for all the access

> service providers who are willing to preserve their clients

> privacy.

>

> And a pox on those who try to defeat and restrict pseudonymity.

Bruce Umbaugh <BDU100F@ODUVM.BITNET>:

> How is posting through anon.penet.fi \*fundamentally\* different

> from posting through any other site?

>

> Please, do, help me see what I'm missing. Show me, if you can,

> how a pseudonymous (for that is what this is) site merits such

> hostility.

John Stanley <stanley@skyking.OCE.ORST.EDU>

> A better question is: why should YOU get to second guess the

> results of a valid newsgroup vote (ones held years ago, in some

> cases) to decide that certain people may not post even though the

> groups decided when they were formed that anyone could post?

>

> This is amazing. All these poeple complaining about a change in

> the status quo (that really isn't), and you want a blanket change

> in the status quo (that really would be).

J. Kamens <jik@mit.edu>:

> It seems obvious to me that the default should be \*not\* to allow

> anonymous postings in a newsgroup. The Usenet has always

> operated on the principle that the status quo should be kept

> unless there's a large number of people who want to change it.

David Weingart <phydeaux@cumc.cornell.edu>:

> People have said that anonymous posting netwide is something new.

> This is garbage; such things have existed as long as I've been on

> the Net (about 3 years). BBS systems and local dialin systems do

> little verification. There are, as someone pointed out, several

> freely accessible NNTP servers out there, and it takes very

> little to hack your new program to fake everthing you want in the

> headers (Good lord, look at the group list in alt sometimes!).

> Having an1234@anon.penet.fi is no different than having

> foo@bar.com, when bar.com is a dialin; all you can do is send

> mail to the user and the site admin to bitch, and the odds are

> the site admin won't do anything.

>

> So far, I've not seen a single convincing argument that the

> "status quo" of the Net was changed by anon.penet.fi going up.

> anon.penet.fi is just another site ...

Michael Stoodt <stoodt@cis.umassd.edu>:

> The status quo IS for sites to be able to add themselves to the

> net at will; and for the site and its users to take

> responsibility for their actions on the net. anon.penet.fi and

> its users are not assuming the same level of responsibility that

> local.bbs.com does.

>

> The status quo was that there was the PRESUMPTION of

> accountability for users. Maybe some sites didn't enforce this

> as much as some would have liked, but anon.penet.fi is

> specifically designed to avoid any such accountability.

John Stanley <stanley@skyking.OCE.ORST.EDU>:

> Wrong. The site has an admin. He has responsibility for that site.

> You simply don't like how he handles his site. Well, news flash:

> it isn't your responsibility to handle his site. You don't get to

> make the rules for him. You make your rules, you decide how to

> handle your users. He makes his rules, he handles his users.

>

> What accountability? To their admin, perhaps. To YOU? Hardly. To

> Dick Depew? ROFL.

Richard M. Hartman <hartman@ulogic.UUCP>:

> At the time of the charters of most existing groups, global

> anonymous access was NOT available, and was NOT considered in the

> charter.

John Stanley <stanley@skyking.OCE.ORST.EDU>:

> I hate to bring facts into this discussion, but yes, indeed, for

> as long as the net has been around, anonymous posting has been

> available. Part of the process of creating a group is to decide

> whether the group is moderated or not, so yes, indeed, the

> question of who may post to the group is considered in the

> formation of every group.

>

> A change in the status quo "in the interest of preserving the

> status quo" is a lie.

Paul Flaherty <paulf@abercrombie.Stanford.EDU>:

> The author clearly states "global anonymous" as opposed to merely

> "anonymous"; the two differ significantly in ease of access.

>

> Aside from access, the new "global anonymous" services differ

> significantly by the degree of anonymity from the old forged

> postings; anyone with a good networking background could trace

> forged postings, while the new services are quite a bit more

> secure.

John Stanley <stanley@skyking.OCE.ORST.EDU>:

> Even with the limited "global", anonymous posting has been around

> for as long as the net has.

>

> The "new" services (which really aren't anything new) make the

> anonymous poster more "responsible" than many old methods of

> posting. At least this way you can send mail to the anonymous

> poster complaining about whatever you want.

ANDREW GREENSHIELDS <andy@apache.dtcc.edu>:

> Those may be good reasons for posting anonymously. I don't think

> anyone has said that they want to ban \*all\* anonymous postings

> \*forever\*. The issue here, as far as I see it, is who is going

> to take responsibilty for articles whose sole intent is to

> injure?

Perry E. Metzger <pmetzger@snark.shearson.com>:

> No one will. No one needs to. The notion that an anonymous posting

> needs to be traceable to its source is a product of the

> unification of the old time conservative desire to squelch free

> speech with the new fangled politically correct liberal desire to

> squelch free speech.

Jay Maynard <jmaynard@nyx.cs.du.edu>:

> Julf unilaterally imposed a change on those groups - that they

> accept anonymous postings - and did not inform the people who

> read those groups of that change, and did not ask them if they

> desired the change.

>

> Richard's default is the correct one: he would require a vote to

> change the pre-Julf status quo. Your default would impose a

> change on folks and then demand that they vote to restore the

> status quo.

Afzal Ballim <afzal@divsun.unige.ch>:

> Jay, by your reasoning why isn't it changing the status quo if a

> new node is added to the net and people start posting from it?

> Okay, you say that we don't KNOW who the people are behind

> postings from Julf's site. But so what? The charter of

> unmoderated groups says nothing about restricting postings from

> sites where the identity of users is not generally accessable

> from outside. If they did, then Julf would have changed the

> "status quo". As many have pointed out, what Richard had proposed

> means that sites downstream from a feed that cancelled a message

> would not got those messages. This seems far more radical a

> change to the status quo than posts from anonymous users turning

> up in a group.

Karl Kleinpaste <Karl\_Kleinpaste@cs.cmu.edu>:

> You didn't find a anonymous userids throughout the Usenet until

> Johan came along.

<jcowling@ophelia.UVic.CA>:

> No, Julf has not imposed a change. Anonymous postings and

> anonymous posting sites have existed for many years before Julf's

> site went up. Julf is MAINTAINING the status quo with his site.

Daniel Veditz <daniel@borland.com>:

> You didn't find them with big red tags saying "Lookit me--I'm

> anonymous!" maybe, but they've always been there. I've seen tons

> of pseudonymous posters--people with cryptic assigned class IDs

> with no signature, people who have bought their own system and

> use cutsie names...

>

> The only differences are:

> - Julf made it easier to post pseudonymously and advertised

> - It's more obvious that these are pseudonymous

> - They all appear to be a single site and thus make a good target

Jay Maynard <jmaynard@nyx.cs.du.edu>:

> Nope. Anonymous posting sites that existed were set up for a

> single, consenting newsgroup. Julf's is the first netwide

> anonymous site.

<jcowling@ophelia.UVic.CA>:

> I intend to statrt up my own Internet site by the end of

> September. I intend to allow anonymous posting. I will be

> maintaining the status quo.

>

> Julf does not have to ask anyone if they desire a change -- he

> isn't changing anything, and in any case he's not breaking any of

> the "rules" of Usenet, because there are no hard-and-fast rules

> on UseNet.

Jay Maynard <jmaynard@nyx.cs.du.edu>:

> Sorry. I categorically reject this argument. Anonymous postings

> netwide are a significant change in the net culture. You will

> not convince me otherwise.

<sward+@cmu.edu>:

> The unmoderated groups already accepted ANY sort of posting -

> including anonymous postings - long before Julf started his

> server ...

Karl Kleinpaste <Karl\_Kleinpaste@cs.cmu.edu>:

> Such a claim ignores the fact that, in general, anonymous (or

> pseudonymous) postings didn't go anywhere but the lone newsgroup

> supported by the individual anonymous server in question. Yes,

> you always \_could\_ forge articles by suitable invocation of

> rnews, or assault on the nearest posting-permitted NNTP server.

> But people didn't, generally. Social habit prevented exercises

> in poor taste.

David Weingart <phydeaux@cumc.cornell.edu>:

> There have \_always\_, so far as I can tell, been innapropriate and

> offensive postings to newsgroups. (And, as I've pointed out from

> my particular experience, these postings are usually from

> non-anonymous users (non-anonymous in the sense that there is no

> instantly-obvious giveaway eddress like an.id@anon.server). They

> didn't start with anonymous servers, they'll continue without it.

>

> The best thing you can do to flamers is ignore them.

Richard Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu:

> The issue of an irresponsible system administrator trying to

> impose his anonymous server on readers of thousands of newsgroups

> is not a trivial one. My proposal to restore the status quo in

> a hierarchy that has protested anonymous postings may not make me

> popular with anonymous posters, but I haven't seen a single

> message claiming that any sci newsgroup has invited anonymous

> postings.

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.3> Is anonymity conducive or neutral to `abuse'?

<KONDARED@PURCCVM.BITNET>:

> I think anonymous posts do help in focusing our attention on the

> content of one's message. Sure lot of anonymous posts are abusive

> or frivolous but in most cases these are by users who find the

> anon facility novel. Once the novelty wears off they are stopping

> their pranks...

Wes Morgan <morgan@engr.uky.edu>:

> I've received \*hundreds\* of anonymous email messages over the last

> few years; fewer than 20 of them were "reasonable posts made with

> good motives." It's getting more and more difficult to remember

> why we need anonymity at all; the abusers are (once again)

> lousing things up for those who truly need the service (or those

> who would put it to good use).

Wes Morgan <morgan@engr.uky.edu>:

> I don't mind seeing the miscellaneous hatred/prejudice/racism;

> those things are part of our nature. However, the notion of

> providing anonymity's shield for these ideas repulses me. If

> they have such strong feelings, why can't they put their name(s)

> on their postings? ... Quite frankly, I loathe communication

> with people who refuse to use their names.

Jonathan I. Kamens <jik@athena.mit.edu>

> NNTP servers that allow posting from anyone are NOT "a service to

> the net." They do the net a disservice.

>

> Terminal servers have the same problems as open NNTP servers --

> they allow people who want to do illegal/immoral/unethical things

> on the Internet to do so without accountability.

>

> There are, by now, public access sites all over this country, if

> not all over the world, that allow very inexpensive access to the

> Usenet and the Internet. There is no reason for NNTP servers to

> allow anyone to post messages through them, and there is no

> reason for terminal servers to allow anyone to connect to them

> and then make outbound connections through them. Perhaps when it

> was harder to get to the Internet or the Usenet, open servers

> could be justified, but not now.

Michael Stoodt <stoodt@cis.umassd.edu>:

> Open NNTP servers are bad, for they allow the same avoidance of

> accountability that anon.penet.fi does. Actually, they're worse,

> for it's rare for them to be able to filter Control headers and

> such; they're very useful for those cretins practicing sendsys

> terrorism and such.

Karl Krueger<kkrueg@ukelele.GCR.COM>:

> That idea (of "asbestos longjohns", the mythical protection form

> flamage) can be seen as an abstraction of what the anon service

> is. It is not as if anonymous posters are somehow "protected" -

> they still get their replies. All an anonymous poster is

> protected from is "real world" damage - the kind of thing that

> any USENETteer should be protected from anyway.

Tom Bryce <tjbryce@unix.amherst.edu>:

> There'll always be abuse of the net with or without anonymous

> services, and tighter verification of ID, more sternly dealing

> with and locking out abusers of the services, limiting posts

> anonymously to a certain amount a day to keep people from

> flooding the network, and the like, the abuse can be cut down to

> a minimum, and the freedom it gives people to post on the

> newsgroups without inhibition or fear is well worth it.

Chuq Von Rospach <chuq@Apple.COM>:

> This debate is showing up exactly what's wrong with anonymous

> postings: for every legitimate use of them, there are dozens of

> cases where people use it to hide from the responsibility of

> their actions.

Richard E. Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu>:

> Anonymous servers have an important function in certain

> newsgroups, and most people who use them do so responsibly.

> However, these servers attract sociopaths who use them to avoid

> responsibility and accountability for their actions.

"somebody"

> I am, in general, against unrestricted anonymous service. There

> are too many abusive people on the net to make it work.

>

> I do not believe we have the appropriate technology to make an

> anonymous service work on the net. Furthermore, I remain

> completely unconvinced that there is a legitimate need, nor is

> the level of maturity in the user population sufficiently level

> where it can be effectively used. It may only be a small

> percentage of people who cause the problems, but that is true of

> nearly everything in history.

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.4> Does anonymity require courage or cowardice?

Dave Ratcliffe <dave@frackit.UUCP>:

> Sure most adults are willing to post under their own names. Why

> would they want to hide behind an anonymous posting service?

> Ashamed of what they have to say or just trying to rile people

> without fear of being identified?

<an8785@anon.penet.fi>:

> I think it takes far more courage to post anonymously than to

> hide behind your affiliations.

Rich Kulawiec <rsk@gynko.circ.upenn.edu>:

> This is ludicrous. If you do not have the courage of your own

> convictions, and are not willing to back those convictions up by

> using your own name, why should anyone pay the slightest

> attention to you? (I certainly won't.) Either you have the guts

> to back up what you say, or you don't; and if you don't, then you

> should probably just be quiet.

Tom Mandel <mandel@netcom.com>

> I think you, sir or madam or whatever you are, are full of it.

> Anonymity is the veil behind which people too cowardly to

> identify themselves with their analyses or opinions hide.

Jim Thomas <jthomas@NETSYS.COM>:

> Although revelation is generally preferable to anonymity, there

> are numerous reasons that are sufficiently strong to discredit

> the "cowardice" thesis.

Karl Krueger <kkrueg@ukelele.GCR.COM>:

> "Hiding behing Julf's server"? No... For many, bouncing things

> off the anon server is routine protection, just like using PGP is

> for others. It's security.

>

> Is it "immature" to "hide behind" this server? Of course not, no

> more is it than it is to send the police an anonymous letter if

> one is informing on a Mafia don. People do get in realspace

> "trouble" for what they say in the USENET cyberspace, you know.

>

> Tell me, if you could get fired for posting something, say, a

> criticism of an illegality (or unethicality) perpetrated by your

> boss, wouldn't you want a way to make the action known to the

> public, anonymously? Anonymousness is not patently cowardice!

> If one believes that the "outside world" will attack one, one

> will use an anonymous method!

Shannon Atkins <satkins@midway.ecn.uoknor.edu>:

> Like I said, if you don't have the balls to post it under your own

> name, it isn't worth posting. It simply isn't important enough

> to post about.

>

> I'm not really sorry if I have offended any of the nameless,

> faceless, spineless PC clone-zombies out there in netland by

> having an opinion.

Michael Miller <michael@umbc.edu>:

> There are some people with whom one should not publicly disagree

> under one's own name. When you want to disagree with such a

> person, cowardice is simply the intelligent way to do it.

>

> Of course, people will hide behind anonymity to post drivel, but

> many people already post drivel without anonymity. Some

> anonymous posters are stupid cowards and some are smart cowards.

> Do you really want to ignore all the smart cowards?

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.5> Is anonymity associated with free speech?

David Sternlight <strnlght@netcom.com>:

> Note again that invoking civil rights or free speech is a big red

> herring on this issue--nothing in this prevents people from

> posting directly--only through an anonymous filter.

>

> This is not a matter of free speech since writers are free to post

> under their names.

Richard M. Hartman <hartman@ulogic.UUCP>:

> So many people (Americans) have used the "right" to free speech in

> defense of this anon server (which does not apply since it is a

> provision limiting the actions of the government, not

> individuals)

Daniel Veditz <daniel@borland.com>:

> Whoa, is freedom of conscience and of speech merely a privilege

> granted by some governments, or is it a true human right

> regardless of whether or not recognized by various governing

> bodies?

>

> In any case I agree that "free speech" considerations are

> irrelevant to this anon server issue.

Knut Langsetmo <knut@iti.org>:

> It is interesting to see that so many champions of 'free speech'

> have opposed the anon server. I for one can testify that there

> have been severe reprecusions for things that I have said. In

> particular, I was fired for suggesting that communism was a good

> idea, "advocating communism". All the talk of having the 'guts'

> to stand behind what you say is just posturing by those who have

> never said anything that people who have power over their lives

> might object to.

David Clunie <dclunie@pax.tpa.com.au>:

> I am amazed that Julf hasn't had to put up with more flak at his

> end over his consumption of bandwidth. The Fins have always been

> awfully tolerant about this sort of thing. It is a sad day when

> the Europeans have to teach the rest of the Western world about

> freedom of speech ! It amazes me that there is not a single

> anonymous server of the type that Julf runs (ie. easy to use and

> universal posting) anywhere in the entire US. Pretty sad. I don't

> understand why. I would have thought some commercial site would

> have the guts to try. What do they fear ? Disconnection or legal

> liability for the posts and mail that they pass on ?

>

> I consider the demise of [my] service to have been rather

> unfortunate, and I wish the Finnish remailer luck ! It is a pity

> that there are very few if any similar services provided with in

> the US. I guess that's the benefit of having a constitution that

> guarantees one freedom of speech and a legal and political system

> that conspires to subvert it in the name of the public good.

Tim Burns <tim@osiris.usi.utah.edu>:

> Recently, the anoymous network service at anon.penet.fi was closed

> down. I feel that act severely compromised the free speech rights

> of those who use the network. Acting to shut down such services

> which allow people to discuss sensitive issues is a grave abuse

> of power, and a threat to the internet community as a whole. I

> am very sad that this happened, and beg the internet community to

> unite in support of free network services such as anon.penet.fi.

David Barr <barr@pop.psu.edu>:

> Exactly whose free speech rights were violated? I hate to see

> people throw around the word "free speech" with little thought as

> to what they are actually saying. Free speech applies only to

> the press, not to those who wish to say what they want on someone

> else's press. The shutting down of anon.penet.fi was a lot of

> things, but it did not violate anyone's free speech rights.

Bob Longo <longo@sfpp.com>:

> You have got to be kidding! Compromised free speech RIGHTS? No

> one is stopping anyone from stating their views or posting. Do

> you think it is a RIGHT to blast anonymous postings all over the

> net with no accountability? Somehow I don't think you will find

> that right in any legal definition of the freedom of speech.

Dave Hayes <dave@jato.jpl.nasa.gov>:

> I think the poster meant "the ideal of free speech" not "the

> restricted legal definition of free speech". With true free

> speech, it doesn't matter what you say you are free to say it. It

> doesn't look like people are stable enough to handle this

> concept, though.

Carl M Kadie <kadie@cs.uiuc.edu>:

> At least in the U.S., anonymity has been seen by the courts as

> related to freedom of expression and freedom of association ...

Rita Marie Rouvalis <rita@eff.org>:

> I've been watching this debate heat up over that past 3 or 4 years

> now as Usenet has exploded in size. The freedom of expression of

> many Usenet readers is actually being denied by abusive users

> because smaller sites are being forced to cut parts of their

> feeds due to volume.

>

> I think "freedom of expression" is a straw man in this case. No

> one has raised issue with the content of the message (at least in

> this thread) -- only the manner in which it was posted. It would

> be interesting to make an analogy to grafitti in this case.

Christopher Pilewski <cap@mb5000.anes.upmc.edu>:

> The internet is a medium of expression. It needs ideas in order

> to have any useful purpose. And, many people need anonymity to

> express their ideas freely. This is why any election (of any

> validity) is by secret ballot! Privacy is not just an aspect of

> freedom, it is a provider of freedom. Privacy is important. You

> do not have freedom of expression if (Your boss will fire you;

> Your co-workers will harass and humiliate you; Or, the government

> maintains files about you) for expressing your views. Sadly, all

> of the above can happen without privacy and anonymity.

Ze Julf <julf@penet.fi>:

> Due to the lawsuit-intensive climate in the US, many anonymous

> services have been short-lived. By setting up anon.penet.fi in

> Finland, I hoped to create a more stable service. Anon.penet.fi

> managed to stay in operation for almost five months. The service

> was protected from most of the usual problems that had forced

> other services to shut down. But there are always going to be

> ways to stop something as controversial as an anon service. In

> this case, a very well-known and extremely highly regarded net

> personality managed to contact exactly the right people to create

> a situation where it is politically impossible for me to continue

> running the service.

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.6> Should anonymous postings be censored?

Merth Eric <emerth@muskwa.ucs.ualberta.ca>

> Seems to me that the issue is not really about accountability but

> whether some people like how other people choose to communicate.

> This service was the first real move toward an open forum that I

> had seen. It is unfortunate that some people could not tolerate

> its existance.

<jcowling@ophelia.UVic.CA>:

> Whatever your opinion of anonymous posting, you MUST agree that no

> individual has the right to determine what someone else can or

> can not read.

Karl Krueger <kkrueg@ukelele.GCR.COM>:

> What can be done to defend the freedom that USENET has enjoyed

> from itself? Since USENET is, by definition, anarchic, existing

> as a whole only because of mutual cooperation from all users,

> everyone must be involved. The state of USENET is very similar

> to the state of the USA - people need to get involved on the most

> basic levels. Individual citizens of cyberspace must become

> knowledgeable about what is actually going on. Threats to USENET

> freedom should not merely be flamed and then passed by, but must

> be actively prevented. When threats like the recent ARMM threat

> emerge, normal users must react.

>

> While ARMM was opposed 3:1 in news.admin.policy, it is scary that

> as many as 1/4 of the voting population (which was, admittedly,

> small) were pro-censorship. There may come a time when such

> efforts as M. Depew's will be greeted with open arms. This is

> scary.

<barnhill@kuhub.cc.ukans.edu>:

> The use of the issues of anonymity and potential copyright

> violation has been at best spurious to the clear agenda of those

> who in their infinite wisdom have chosen to become the moral

> arbiters of society, which is to disrupt any and all

> communication which they percieve as threatening.

Perry E. Metzger <pmetzger@snark.shearson.com>:

> Unfortuntately, there are lots of people out there who think that

> they should be regulating what sort of thing other people are

> permitted to read, and they seem to be alive and well and

> operating on Usenet. Horror of horrors! People might post

> offensive things anonymously and get away with it! We must stop

> this plague, the PC censors tell us.

>

> I know that the notion of freedom of speech is a radical notion to

> some people. I understand that the idea that words are not knives

> and cannot physically injure people is a mere three hundred years

> old or so and thus still difficult for some people to grasp.

> However, understand this -- this Usenet site administrator will

> not sit idly by and allow fools decide for me what I can and

> cannot read.

Felix Gallo <felixg@coop.com>:

> "deeply offensive" is in the eye of the beholder, and \*THAT\* is

> what the entire problem is. I reserve the right to choose for

> myself what I consider deeply offensive, and consider myself

> quite competent at pressing the appropriate keys to ensure that I

> don't have to look at things I no longer want to see.

Dave Hayes <dave@jato.jpl.nasa.gov>:

> The real threat of anonymity is the expressing of ideas which the

> consensus does not wish to be expressed.

>

> Those who will not express those ideas (i.e. some of those who

> cite "responsible" posting practives) are threatened by their

> very existence...especially if they agree with "non-approved"

> ideas. This would expose them to the loss of external validation

> from the operating consensus.

Steve Summit <scs@adam.mit.edu>:

> The saddest thing, in a way, is that the paranoid control freaks

> I'm now shuddering at the complicity of are pretty much

> "justified:" the legal climate in the United States is getting so

> obscenely perverted that they practically do have to be this

> paranoid and repressive lest they get their sites and their

> livelihoods shut down by equally paranoid control freaks who have

> managed to work themselves up into a froth of righteous

> indignation about something allegedly wrong but allegedly

> preventable which some worthless nonentity might be able to

> perpetrate with the apparent aid of some harmless, idealistic,

> but defenseless Finn.

Brad Templeton <brad@clarinet.com>:

> If somebody abuses the service of such a person to disrupt the net

> and hide, they will get their name revealed and their access cut

> off. This is moderation in a post-sense, which has a lot of

> merit.

>

> (Indeed, I have recommended post-moderation as a superior scheme

> for many moderated newsgroups. It is how all online services,

> except Prodigy, work.)

[anonymous]

>It is not moderation and it is not filtering. It is censorship,

>and it is based on ignorance and bigotry.

Brad Templeton <brad@clarinet.com>:

> Read your USENET history before you accuse me, of all people, of

> even suggesting censorship. If you'll recall, when this debate

> started, I said that anon servers were no big shakes and

> supported their right to exist and their importance. What an

> odd line to find used on me after that.

Richard E. Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu>:

> I certainly don't want to do anything that I am not "authorized"

> to do. If you can suggest a better way to "minimally-moderate",

> I'd appreciate it if you would share your ideas with us.

\_\_\_\_\_\_

<3.7> Can restrictions on anonymity be enforced? (How?)

Eric Schilling <gandalf@cyberspace.org>:

> The main point I would like to make here is that while we can go

> through and revise the news sw to "reject anon posts to technical

> newsgroups" or some such thing, I think the attempt will prove

> futile. Each attempt to modify news can result in a changed

> approach by anon service providers to thwart the change. I think

> this would be pointless.

<jbuck@ohm.berkeley.edu>:

> This whole debate is a lot of "sound and fury signifying nothing"

> because, even if you all decide to ban anonymous posting servers,

> it is not enforceable. The only people who conceivably could

> enforce retrictions are those that control the international

> links.

>

> Policy changes should be made by cooperation, not by attempting

> to dictate. ...you need to persuade those who run the services

> to act like this through friendly persuasion, not by trying to

> beat them over the head with a stick (especially a stick you

> don't even have).

Al Billings <mimir@stein.u.washington.edu>:

> I wouldn't help people get rid of anon postings as a group. If you

> don't like what someone says, then you put THAT anon address in

> your kill file, not all of them. Of course, if and when I get an

> anon site going, I'm just going to assign fake names like

> "jsmith" instead of "anon5564" to avoid most of the hassles.

> You'll never know it is anonymous will you?

Anne Bennett <anne@alcor.concordia.ca>:

> I must admit to some astonishment at this argument. I see the

> value of anonymous postings under some circumstances, yet believe

> strongly that these should be identified as such, so that people

> who do not wish to read material from people who won't identify

> themselves, don't have to.

>

> I fail to see what good you would be accomplishing, and indeed

> surmise that you will cause many people inconvenience and

> annoyance, by hiding the anonymity of postings from your

> anonymous site. Would you care to justify where the hell you get

> the gall to try to prevent people from effectively filtering

> their news as they see fit?

Nicholas Kramer <nk24+@andrew.cmu.edu>:

> It seems obvious to me that Julf will never make his anonymous

> server agreeable to all. Seeing's how at present the overseas

> lines are being used for this, and that there is an abundance of

> people willing to put their money where their mouth is, why

> doesn't someone in North America set up a new anonymous site WITH

> THEIR OWN RULES. Set up an anonymous server that, say, doesn't

> allow anonymous postings to comp.\* groups, or has the "default"

> as no anonymous. It seems to me that one of the best ways to kill

> off a radical idea is to endorce half of it and let the other

> half wither away. Besides, if there is a "more reasonable" anon

> server around, I'm sure more sites wouldn't have second thoughts

> about killfiling anon.penet.fi.

Dr. Cat <cat@wixer.cactus.org>:

> Can the anon servers be banished from the net forever? Don't

> count on it. Today, tomorrow, next year, it may be possible to

> keep systems like anon.penet.fi from being widely used. But does

> anyone here think that some easy method for creating messages

> totally anonymously won't be widespread on the networks of a

> hundred years from now? The technology to make it happen is easy,

> the technology to keep it from happening is hard and will get

> harder. Widespread anonymity will happen sooner or later. Count

> on it. You can bury your head in the sand and say "It isn't

> acceptable because bad things can be done with it", or you can be

> pragmatic and say "This is coming, so what is the best way to

> deal with the consequences of it"?

Richard E. Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu>:

> I am writing to inform you that if Julf, admin@anon.penet.fi, does

> not soon block anonymous postings to the "sci" hierarchy, then I

> will activate an "Automated Retroactive Minimal Moderation"

> script that will cancel postings to this hierarchy from his

> server. ...

>

> Rest assured that there is nothing personal in this. I have not

> read your postings, and I have no reason to believe that they

> were out of line in any way other than being anonymous.

>

> You have several possible courses of action if you wish to post to

> the "sci" hierarchy while the "Automated Retroactive Minimal

> Moderation" is in effect:

>

> \*1 convince Julf to accept the "Petersen Proposal" for default

> settings for different hierarchies. I promise to turn off the

> ARMM script as soon as I hear that he will do this (or anything

> reasonably responsive).

Lasse Hiller|e Petersen <lhp@daimi.aau.dk>:

> I HATE to see my name being connected with this.

>

> Who, just WHO, do you think you are?

>

> I \_proposed\_, \_suggested\_ a compromise. You make it sound like an

> ULTIMATUM. I am appaled and ashamed.

Karl Kleinpaste <Karl\_Kleinpaste@cs.cmu.edu>:

> blockage from an anonymous server is not a death sentence. Find

> another anon server. Post under your own name. Pick on an open

> NNTP server and forge elsehow. Find a friend who will post for

> you in some fashion. There's a boatload of solutions to the

> problem of getting your ever-so-valuable words posted to any

> newsgroup you want.

Richard E. Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu>:

> Meanwhile, anonymous servers are evolving into less virulent forms

> themselves, thus reducing the need for something like ARMM.

> However, I believe that various antidotes against breaches of

> netiquette ranging from mild but repeated offenses to abusive

> net-sociopaths should remain in our armamentarium, "just in

> case".

>

> What we need next is a mechanism for diagnosing net-pathogens, and

> for prescribing the appropriate net-medication. Otherwise, a

> net-doctor is likely to face charges of net-malpractice. :-)

>

> To the "magic bullet"!

Alexander Chislenko <sasha@ra.cs.umb.edu>:

> Of course, it is possible to set up a distributed anonymous

> encrypted remailing system that cannot be stopped or compromised

> by taking over any given number of sites. Of course, anonymous

> postings will always exist in a growing variety of forms on the

> Net whose functional structure very soon will be drastically

> different from today's.

"somebody":

> I believe some regional network service providers in the US

> prohibit users to use anonymous postings or mail as part of their

> contracts. Does yours?

\_\_\_\_\_

<3.8> What are the effects of anonymity?

<an8729@anon.penet.fi>:

> Since I began posting anonymously (to show support for general

> principles of personal privacy) I have been subject to far more

> abuse and attack than I ever received before. People seem to

> find it easier to flame and insult someone whose name they don't

> know. Perhaps it's easier to pretend that there is no person

> behind the email address who feels the sting of abusive comments.

Tarl Neustaedter <tarl@sw.stratus.com>:

> Anonimity leads to fun psych experiments; the literature is filled

> with all the various things that people will do anonymously that

> they won't otherwise. Including one notorious study involving

> torture that would not have passed today's ethical standards. Fun

> stuff, in any case.

>

> FINE. LEAVE US OUT OF IT.

Brian W. Ogilvie <ogil@quads.uchicago.edu>:

> The service provides a mechanism for forwarding mail to the

> original poster. Since most Usenet readers don't know John Smith

> from Jane Doe except by their opinions and their address, the

> effect of having an anonymous posting to which mail replies can

> be directed is minimal, except for those who personally know the

> poster--and ... the lack of anonymity could be serious. Any

> mechanism like this is liable to abuse, but the benefits as well

> as the costs must be weighed.

Perry E. Metzger <pmetzger@snark.shearson.com>:

> The tragedy of pseudonymous posting is that, once used, it must

> always be used. ... This is going to be a problem for

> pseudonymous posters; we'll start recognizing them by their

> grammatical habits or choice of words, and they'll wind up using

> pseudonyms all the time, in \*everything\* they post.

>

> I had thought of pseudonymity as a cloak, to be used at will; now,

> it's starting to look like a deadman switch that has to be used

> at all times.

>

> People speak of the 'freedom' of pseudonymity; here's an example

> of its restrictions.

Melinda Shore <shore@dinah.tc.cornell.edu>:

> The problem ... is less one of authority than it is

> responsibility. People who dissasociate their identities from

> their postings no longer need to be as responsible, and the

> results of that are the kinds of content-free flamers that show

> up, for example, in the gay-related newsgroups.

Dave Hayes <dave@elxr.jpl.nasa.gov>:

> What a primal example of human nature. I have three questions for

> you folks.

>

> Do people really say different things to each other based upon

> whether their identity is or isn't known?

>

> Are people really so affected by what other people say that the

> verbage is labeled "abuse"?

>

> Most importantly, on a forum that prizes itself on the freedom of

> communication that it enjoys, is there really such a thing as

> freedom of communication?

Karl Kleinpaste <Karl\_Kleinpaste@cs.cmu.edu>:

> Weak reasoning.

> With freedom comes responsibility.

Dave Hayes <dave@elxr.jpl.nasa.gov>:

> Responsibility isn't real if it is enforced. True responsibilty

> comes with no coercion.

"somebody":

> These problems are not a service. Freedom without responsibility

> leads to barbarism, and the way anonymous services are structured

> is to remove the checks that impose personal responsibility.

Fred McCall <mccall@mksol.dseg.ti.com>:

> It seems to me that one of the big 'needs' of anonymous servers on

> the net is as protection against the sort of person that uses

> anonymous servers.

>

> Hey, maybe there's something to this anonymity thing after all,

> but only as a defense against the sort of people who seem to be

> using it...

Chris Walsh <mack23@avalon.eecs.nwu.edu>:

> The S/N ratio on usenet is, IMHO, so low that complaints about

> posts from anon servers are basically using the anon-servers as

> a whipping boy. Clearly, any mechanism which decreases the

> difficulty of posting in an "untraceable" way will increase the

> quantity of drivel made available, but it will also increase the

> quantity of useful-but-sensitive material as well. Perhaps the

> net effect (pardon the pun) will be a slight decrease in the S/N

> ratio, but unless an appreciable proportion of posts use the

> anon-servers, I fail to see how this is so much more dreadful

> than what we already have that anyone would get their shorts

> twisted over it. I can see how it might produce momentary

> flurries of drivel in certain groups, but these groups already

> have such flurries regularly.

<C445585@mizzou1.missouri.edu>:

> In the larger context, it seems like, as USENET/internet grows,

> we're going to continue to have problems with abuse AND with the

> need for anonymity. I say this because as we expand, we get more

> people (thus more people who may be abusers of the system), and

> also because as we grow we start having more important things go

> around here. Sexual-abuse discussions are a lot more personal

> than discussions on whether PKP's patent on RSA is valid or not.

> In the future, more personal and more important discussions

> (maybe sci.\* groups with prestige similar to that of scientific

> journals) will crop up.

Chris Walsh <mack23@avalon.eecs.nwu.edu>:

> Can anyone email me an example of a newsgroup whose traffic was

> noticeably worsened, S/N ratio wise, by the anon-servers?

Ron Dippold <rdippold@qualcomm.com>:

> Are you including Depew as an effect of the anon-servers?

Wes Groleau <groleau@e7sa.crd.ge.com>

> Several newsgroups were noticeably worsened by ARMM-5b ("b" for

> boo-boo) which--as everybody knows--was caused by anon-servers

> :-)

Richard E. Depew <red@redpoll.neoucom.edu>:

> The consensus seems to be that a general anonymous posting service

> such as that at anon.penet.fi seems sufficiently corrosive of the

> trust and civility of the net that this particular experiment

> should be ended. Perhaps the next time the question comes up we

> can say: "We tried it - we learned it does more harm than good -

> and we stopped it."

\* \* \*

This is Part 2 of the Anonymity FAQ, obtained via anonymous FTP to

rtfm.mit.edu:/pub/usenet/news.answers/net-anonymity/ or newsgroups

alt.privacy, alt.answers, news.answers every 21 days.

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