

= On the Internet , nobody knows you 're a dog =

" On the Internet , nobody knows you 're a dog " is an adage which began as a cartoon caption by Peter Steiner and published by The New Yorker on July 5 , 1993 . The cartoon features two dogs : one sitting on a chair in front of a computer , speaking the caption to a second dog sitting on the floor listening to the first . As of 2011 , the panel was the most reproduced cartoon from The New Yorker , and Steiner has earned over US \$ 50 @ , @ 000 from its reprinting .

= = History = =

Peter Steiner , a cartoonist and contributor to The New Yorker since 1979 , said the cartoon initially did not get a lot of attention , but later took on a life of its own , and that he felt similar to the person who created the " smiley face " . In fact , Steiner was not that interested in the Internet when he drew the cartoon , and although he did have an online account , he recalled attaching no " profound " meaning to the cartoon ; it was just something he drew in the manner of a " make @ - @ up @ - @ a @ - @ caption " cartoon .

In response to the comic 's popularity , he stated , " I can 't quite fathom that it 's that widely known and recognized . "

= = Context = =

The cartoon marks a notable moment in the history of the Internet . Once the exclusive domain of government engineers and academics , the Internet had by then become a subject of discussion in general interest magazines like The New Yorker . Lotus Software founder and early Internet activist Mitch Kapor commented in a Time magazine article in 1993 that " the true sign that popular interest has reached critical mass came this summer when the New Yorker printed a cartoon showing two computer @ - @ savvy canines " .

The cartoon symbolizes an understanding of Internet privacy that stresses the ability of users to send and receive messages in general anonymity . Lawrence Lessig suggests " no one knows " because Internet protocols do not force users to identify themselves ; although local access points such as a user 's university may , this information is privately held by the local access point and is not an intrinsic part of the Internet transaction .

A study by Morahan @ - @ Martin and Schumacher (2000) on compulsive or problematic Internet use discusses this phenomenon , suggesting the ability to self @ - @ represent from behind the computer screen may be part of the compulsion to go online . The phrase can be taken " to mean that cyberspace will be liberatory because gender , race , age , looks , or even ' dogness ' are potentially absent or alternatively fabricated or exaggerated with unchecked creative license for a multitude of purposes both legal and illegal " , an understanding that echoed statements made in 1996 by John Gilmore , a key figure in the history of Usenet . The phrase also suggests the ability to " computer cross @ - @ dress " and represent oneself as a different gender , age , race , etc . On another level , " the freedom which the dog chooses to avail itself of , is the freedom to ' pass ' as part of a privileged group ; i.e. human computer users with access to the Internet " .

According to Bob Mankoff , The New Yorker 's cartoon editor , " The cartoon resonated with our wariness about the facile façade that could be thrown up by anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of html . "

= = In popular culture = =

The cartoon has inspired the play Nobody Knows I 'm a Dog by Alan David Perkins . The play revolves around six different individuals unable to communicate effectively with people in their lives who find the courage to socialize on the Internet , protected by their anonymity .

The Apple Internet suite Cyberdog was named after this cartoon .

A cartoon by Kaamran Hafeez published in The New Yorker on February 23 , 2015 features a

similar pair of dogs watching their owner sitting at a computer , with one asking the other , "
Remember when , on the Internet , nobody knew who you were ? "