**Printing Privacy**

I find this article very interesting because it reminds me of the massive wire tapping government “scandal” that had surfaced in the news not too long ago. It doesn’t surprise me one bit that our government has a tracking system built into most (or more likely all) printers in use today and up to ten years old. I can see how it is good for stopping criminal usage of a printer; such as counterfeiting or printing child pornography, and how it would allow for particular agencies to track down the owner of the machine producing such materials. But it also sounds as though the system is far too simple and easy to crack.

According to the article, an intern from the Electronic Frontier Foundation was able to decipher these hidden yellow dot barcodes (from a month’s collection of various samples) in about a week. So even though there is a printed material tracking system in place, it’s not well encrypted. If someone with enough mathematical background gets a hold of your printed materials they could possibly track you down and do who knows what to you. It doesn’t do much good for the common honest person. The system presents a huge issue on the invasion of privacy too. Let’s say a person was spreading free copies of their book around and it contained some controversial or “unpatriotic” material. It finds its way into the hands of one of these government or agency officials, and before you know it the person is in custody for marketing “illegal” material without a permit. It seems our right to free speech is being infringed upon through the use of these hidden bar codes. In a broader perspective, it appears to be another small part of a system where the government can control and censor information they consider “sensitive” to the public.