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NEWS / PRIVACY — 2016/12/05

Privacy is a universal right

Mullvad was founded in 2009 purely with the ambition of protecting privacy. This blog post explains the fundamentals of privacy and why this important subject is often overlooked.

Toward the end, we explain the steps you can take toward obtaining online privacy and the role that Mullvad VPN plays.

Privacy goes online

Not too long ago, privacy was still regarded as the right of the individual to be physically alone without being observed. However, with the advent of the Internet and the proliferation of a burgeoning digital society, our lives have increasingly become less private and more accessible.

Today, privacy is inextricably linked to the ownership of the information we write, create, discuss, or share electronically.

As our habits change and our lives are shared online, the necessity to understand all aspects of

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online privacy become ever more important. Most of our online searches, posts, shares, tweets, and pics are not only seen by others but also can potentially be used against us.

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You may think you are in control of your privacy, but are you really?

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The fundamentals of privacy

Being able to make decisions privately without being scrutinized – and controlling how and to what extent that private information is communicated to others – is at the very core of personhood and individuality. A lack of privacy can lead to self-censorship and therefore a loss in a piece of who you are.

Privacy allows for norms, ethics, and laws to be freely discussed, tested, challenged, and evaluated. Democracy, therefore, cannot flourish and develop, nor indeed exist, without privacy.

The ability to control and manage our individual privacy has become crucially dependent upon security. Without security, you have no guarantee that your information will remain private.

Moreover, without anonymity from third parties, a private conversation occurring between identified persons can lead outsiders to make unsubstantiated conclusions. Anonymity is therefore a key aspect of privacy.

The problem

As a result of the digital revolution, it has become cheaper and easier to store and process data. So easy, in fact, that these days almost everything is stored forever and continuously reprocessed and updated.

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Sometimes data is stored without personal information, but if, at any moment in time, an anonymous set of data becomes linked to an identified set of data (such as when you pay for a drink with your VISA card) all that data is no longer anonymous. This data is created not only from the present but also the past as well as in the future.

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When we use free services such as search engines and social media, we are unwittingly feeding more of our personal information into the hands of private corporations.

It may seem innocent until you realize that your usage statistics are a commodity that can be sold to the highest bidder. These corporations prey on the fact that most of us are too lazy to read service agreements and will thus press "Agree" quite routinely without giving it a second thought.

The user agreement for the app of a certain hamburger chain in Sweden contains 3,094 words, with a link to a privacy policy that is 3,092 words long – in total, around 22 printed pages. Hope your hamburger is not getting cold while you are reading.

As more and more information is stored digitally, efforts to keep that information anonymous become nearly impossible since forming connections and drawing conclusions between different sets of data become far too easy.

Who has the power

For a homework assignment, students were asked to perform an online search for the same phrase and then describe the search result. They all had different answers! Each search result was tailored to that particular student's specific online habits.

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The exercise made the students realize that we all live in an information bubble controlled by others. This is power. This is control. Who has this power and what can we do about it?

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Companies and governments are methodically monitoring us and

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This can be dangerous since certain opinions and actions which are socially accepted today may become frowned upon or even illegal in the future.

Do you trust every existing and future holder of information about you? Forever?

It is staggering to comprehend just how many aspects of today's connected digital and cloud societies can be taken advantage of by the wrong people and unscrupulous organizations.

Mullvad VPN

Mullvad protects your privacy and acts as a security shield between you and the internet. Mullvad accesses the internet on the user's behalf and enforces a strict no data-logging policy.


It protects personal information with the use of encryption and masks user metadata by hiding the user's actual IP address and replacing it with another. This replacement address is shared with many other users which not only protects each individual's user data but also hides his or her pattern of activity.

Mullvad's protection stretches from the user's computer all the way through an exit point elsewhere in the world. Users are therefore protected from their local environments, whether it be cafe, local community, or country.

Mullvad is your answer to minimizing personal risk, preventing identity theft, and safeguarding

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Used together with the privacy window in your browser, Mullvad helps to keep your online activity from being tracked and analyzed. In this way, you can avoid having your personal data, such as previous search habits, geographical location, and other personal behavior. Mullvad gives you access to objective information and an objective internet.

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How to improve your online privacy

We've put together some guides which outline steps you can take to improve your privacy online.

It is our intention to continually add to this series:

- 1. Step one: change your online habits** – begin with these simple changes.
- 2. Step two: plugins that block and protect** – continue by blocking trackers, and more.
- 3. Step three: create better passwords** – improve your password habits.

Legal disclaimer

Mullvad (Amagicom AB) offers a VPN service with a focus on the right to privacy and freedom of expression without censorship, both upheld in the UN's

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 12 and 19) and the
European Convention on Human Rights (articles 8 and 10).

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