Computer and Network Security

Lecture 20: Web Privacy

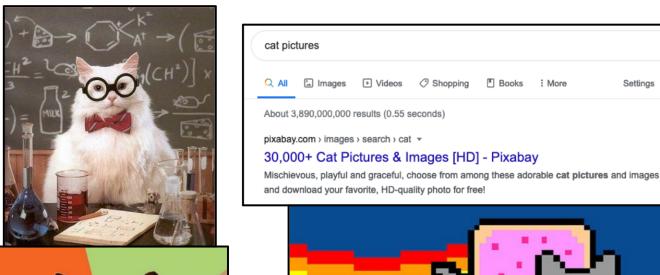
COMP-5370/6370 Fall 2025



What can it do?

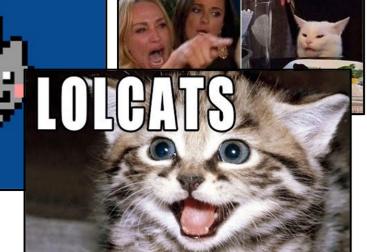


The "web" was built to serve cat pictures.









What can it do?



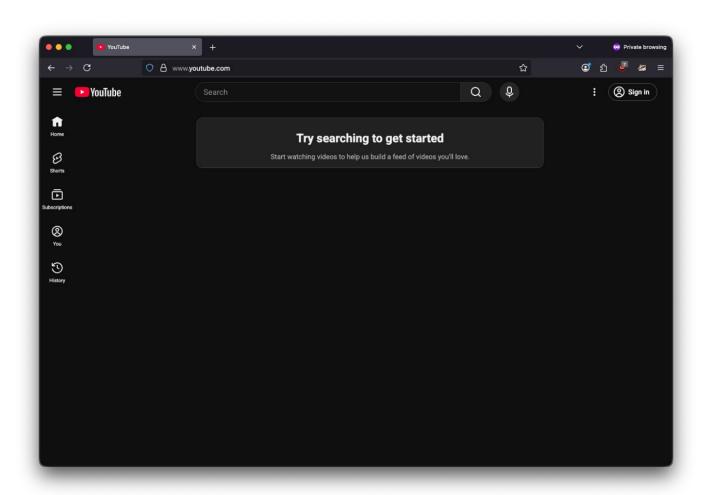
The "web" was built to serve cat pictures.

It was **NOT** build to serve cat pictures:

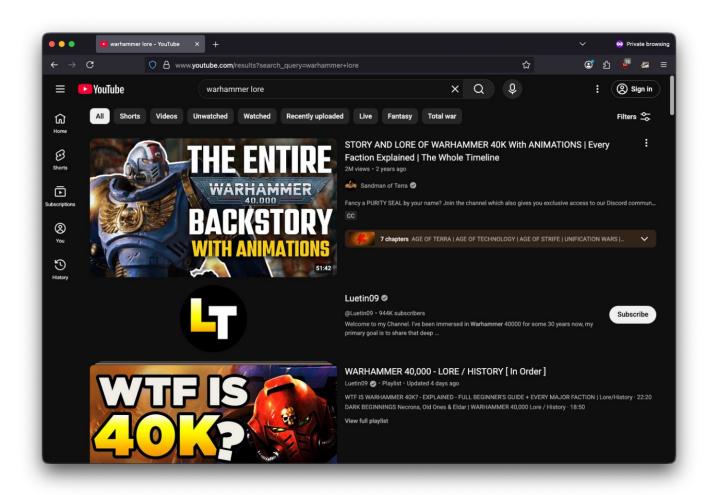
- In a secure way
- In a private way
- In a safe way
- In a trustworthy way

The "web" is insecure by-design and by-incentive.

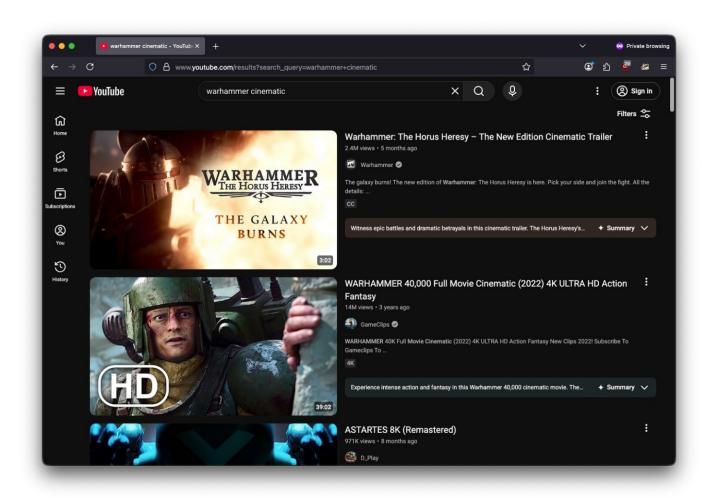




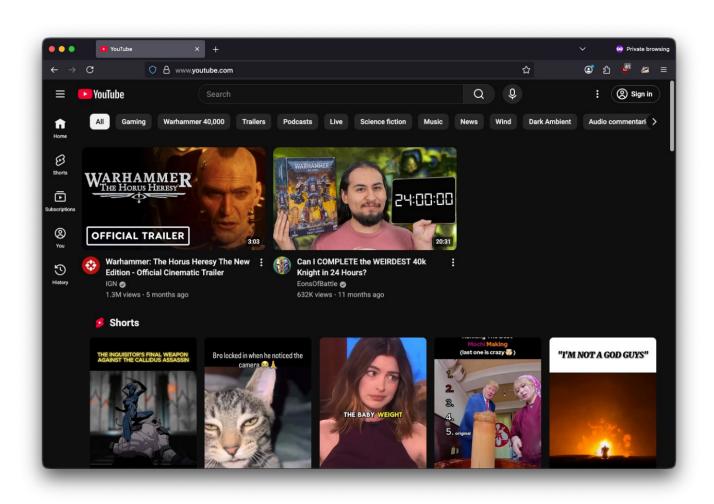




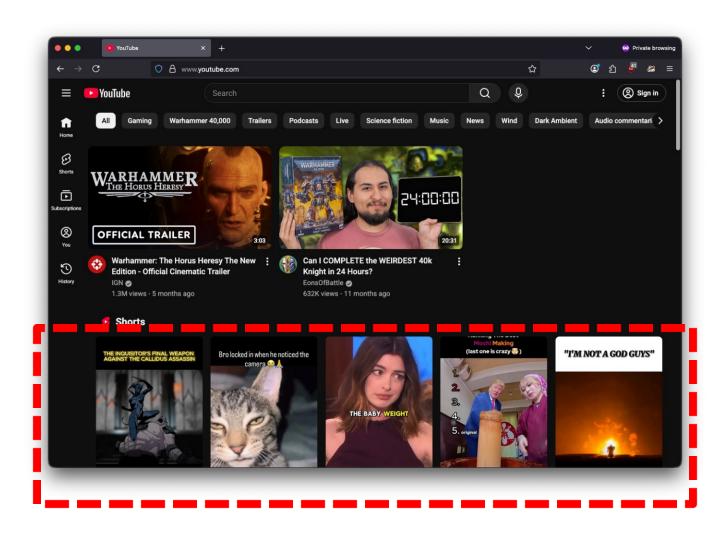




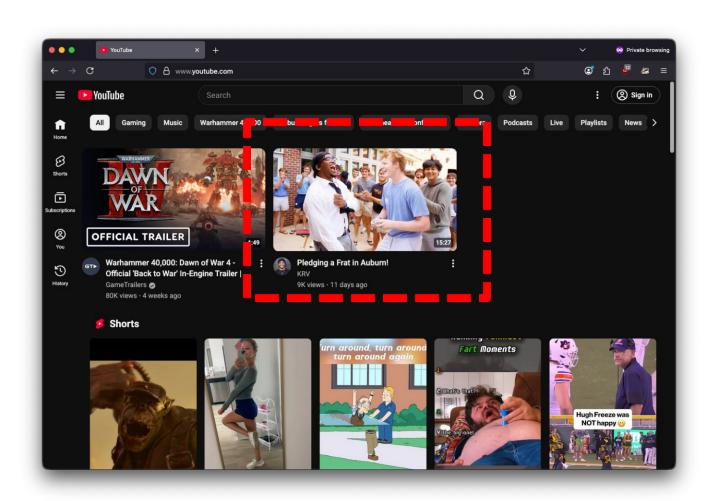




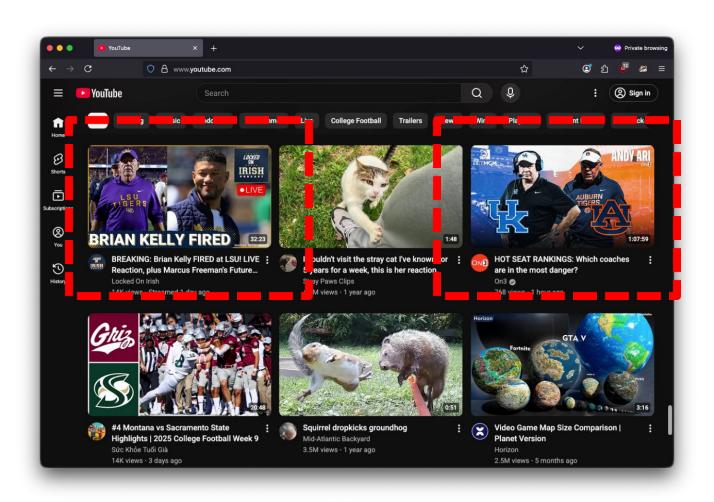




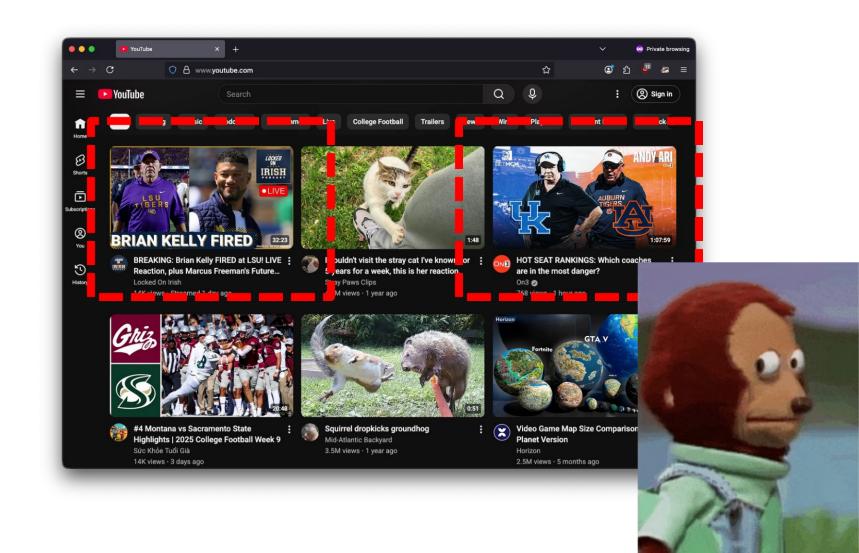




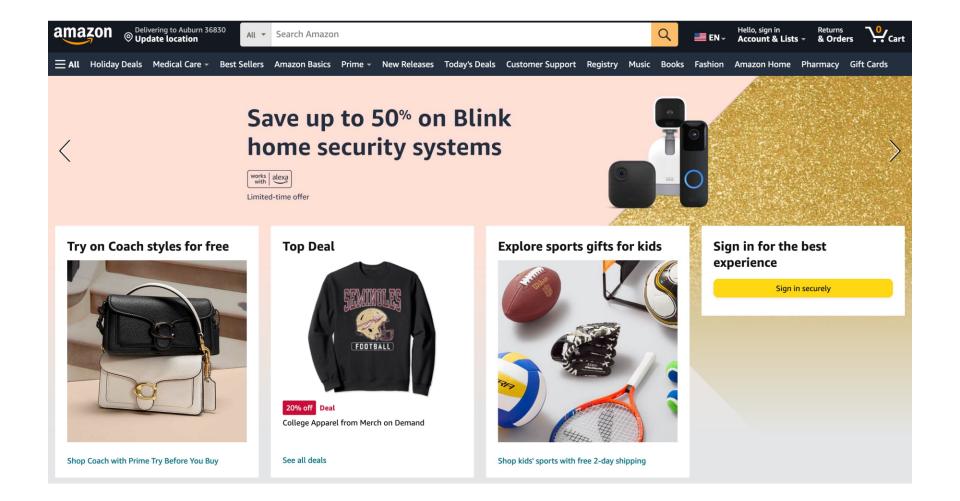


















First Response Early Result Pregnancy Test, 3 tests, Packaging May Vary ★★★★★ ▼ 486 customer reviews | 17 answered questions #1 Best Seller in Pregnancy Tests 47 Amazon Students rated this highly • *** List Price: \$19.57 Price: \$12.98 Prime & Free Returns. Details You Save: \$6.59 (34%) Note: Available at a lower price from other sellers, potentially without free Prime shipping. In Stock. Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. Gift-wrap available. Want it Tuesday, March 24? Order within 29 hrs 56 mins and choose One-Day Shipping at checkout. Details Package Quantity: 1 2 3 \$12.98 **/Prime** \$41.00 *Prime*





sa.

<



Roll over image to zoom in

First Response Early Result Pregnancy Test, 3 tests, Packaging May Vary

★★★★ ▼ 486 customer reviews | 17 answered questions

#1 Best Seller (in Pregnancy Tests

47 Amazon Students rated this highly * ****

List Price: \$19.57

Price: \$12.98 **Prime** & Free Returns. Details

You Save: \$6.59 (34%)

Note: Available at a lower price from other sellers, potentially without free Prime shipping.

In Stock.

Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. Gift-wrap available.

Want it Tuesday, March 24? Order within 29 hrs 56 mins and choose One-Day Shipping at checkout. Details

Package Quantity: 1

\$12.98 \$12.98

2 \$41.00 *Prime* 3 \$57.99

Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought



Vitafusion Prenatal DHA and Folic Acid Gummy Vitamins, 180 Count ★★★☆☆ 140 \$20.25 Prime



One A Day Women's Prenatal One Pill, 30 Count ★★★☆☆ 18 \$13.48 **Prime**



Motherhood

Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy:... the pregnancy experts... **★★★★** 804 #1 Best Seller in



Summer's Eve Cleansing Wash, Morning Paradise, 15 Ounce **★★★★** 44 \$3.99



Nexcare 524560 Basal **Digital Thermometer ★★★☆☆ 19** \$14.06 *Prime*



Nature Made Prenatal Multi Vitamin Value Size. Tablets, 250-Count **全全全** 213 \$16.79 *Prime*



Troian Condom Pleasure Pack Lubricated, 40 Count **★★★★** 126 \$18.12 Prime



Page 6 of 14 Start over









Trending News

Celebrity

Buzz Chat

+ Arcade



Sign In

24 Things You Probably Didn't **Know About Taylor Swift, But Should**

She breaks records and changes the rules.













1 In store

ADVERTISEMENT



7 Gerber Printable Coupons!

















Sign In





Trending News

Celebrity

Buzz Chat

+ Arcade





















24 Things You Probably Didn't **Know About Taylor Swift, But Should**

She breaks records and changes the rules.



View All 64 Comments

































Real-World Example



The Incredible Story Of How Target Exposed A Teen Girl's Pregnancy



GUS LUBIN FEB. 16, 2012, 10:27 AM

Target broke through to a new level of customer tracking with the help of statistical genius Andrew Pole, according to a New York Times Magazine cover story by Charles Duhigg.

Pole identified 25 products that when purchased together indicate a women is likely pregnant. The value of this information was that Target could send coupons to the pregnant woman at an expensive and habit-forming period of her life.

Plugged into Target's customer tracking technology, Pole's formula was a beast. Once it even exposed a teen girl's pregnancy:



Internet Privacy in 2025









Privacy



Privacy, at an extremely simplistic level, is the fundamental right to control what people know about you.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

The 4th Amendment

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Marrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Gath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Internet Privacy

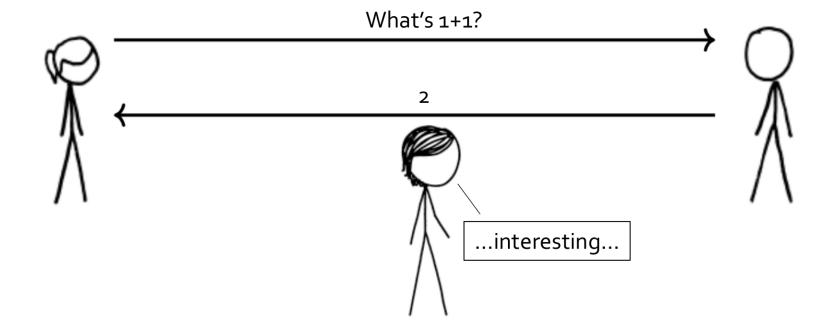


Internet privacy is the the right to control what data you share, when you share it, and who it is shared with.

 Different from Internet security but is related in important ways

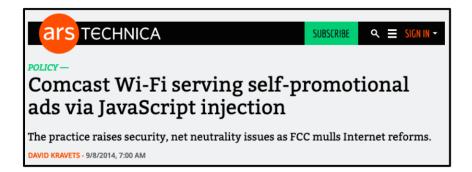
A Communications Channel





Network-Level Injection

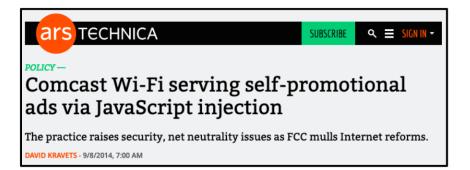




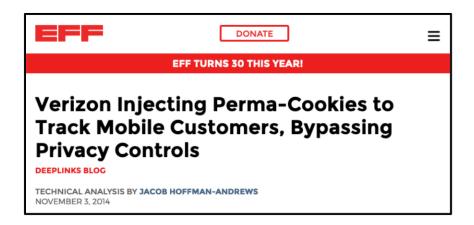
 ISPs caught inserting content into customers' traffic to serve ads

Network-Level Injection





 ISPs caught inserting content into customers' traffic to serve ads



 ISPs caught inserting user-identifiers into customers' traffic to allow others to track

Network-Level Monitoring



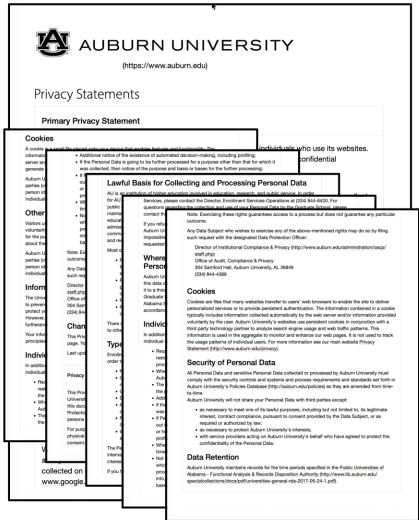


 ISPs passively monitor customers' traffic for tracking



Network-Level Monitoring





- ISPs passively monitor customers' traffic for tracking
- User agrees to thousand-page ToS which hides usage

+17 more pages

Network-Level Monitoring





- The Intercept_

 GOOGLE'S SIDEWALK LABS PLANS TO PACKAGE AND SELL LOCATION DATA ON MILLIONS OF CELLPHONES

 Google's sibling company Sidewalk Labs offers planning agencies the ability to model an entire city's patterns of movement.

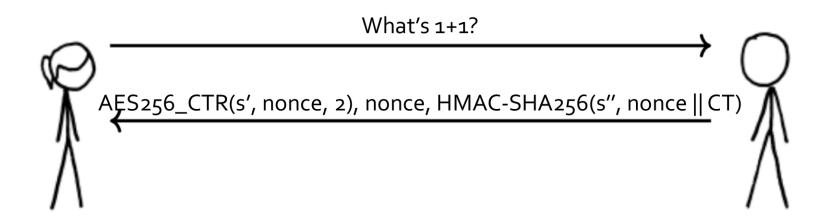
 Ava Kofman

 January 28 2019, 7:05 a.m.
- ISPs passively monitor customers' traffic for tracking
- User agrees to thousand-page ToS which hides usage
- Companies treats as new revenue source

Building a Secure Channel







Content Confidentiality



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End-Point Confidentiality



```
Transport Layer Security
TLSv1.3 Record Layer: Handshake Protocol: Client Hello
     Content Type: Handshake (22)
     Version: TLS 1.0 (0x0301)
     Length: 512
  Handshake Protocol: Client Hello
       Handshake Type: Client Hello (1)
       Length: 508
       Version: TLS 1.2 (0x0303)
       Random: 31bcfa8d853cabd02164668112e80be73c3c20cf565501ab530954cf5df68e2a
       Session ID Length: 32
       Session ID: 8b4741ce538f3a0a2b8ff57688707b629edafac91f747520737cd09ffcf280aa
       Cipher Suites Length: 34
     > Cipher Suites (17 suites)
       Compression Methods Length: 1
     > Compression Methods (1 method)
       Extensions Length: 401
     v Extension: server_name (len=31)
          Type: server_name (0)
          Length: 31
       > Server Name Indication extension
            Server Name list length: 29
            Server Name Type: host_name (0)
            Server Name length: 26
            Server Name: mozilla.cloudflare-dns.com
```

End-Point Confidentiality



```
Domain Name System (query)
  Transaction ID: 0x1c70
> Flags: 0x0100 Standard query
  Ouestions: 1
  Answer RRs: 0
  Authority RRs: 0
  Additional RRs: 0
v Oueries
  v mozilla.cloudflare-dns.com: type A, class IN
       Name: mozilla.cloudflare-dns.com
        [Name Length: 26]
        [Label Count: 3]
       Type: A (Host Address) (1)
       Class: IN (0x0001)
  [Response In: 156]
```

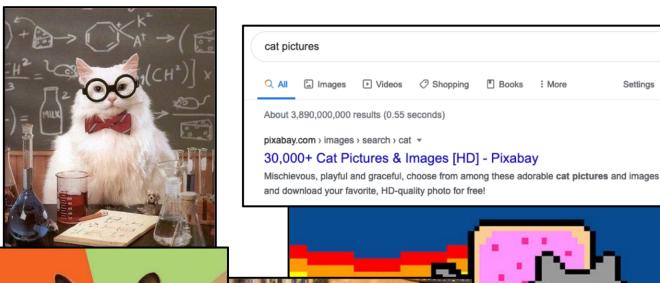




What can it do?

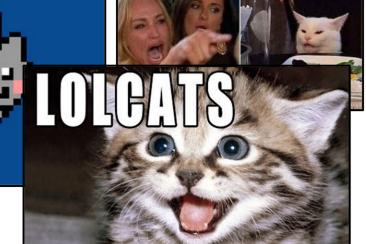


The "web" was built to serve cat pictures.







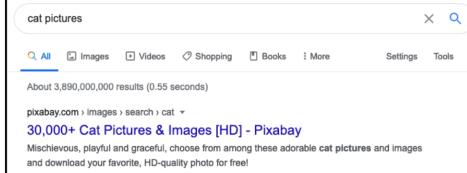


What can it do?



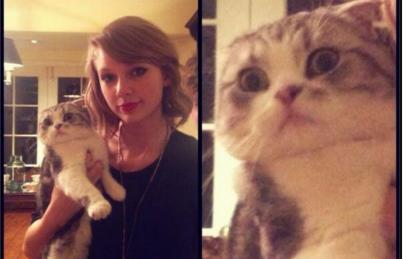
The "web" was built to serve cat pictures.







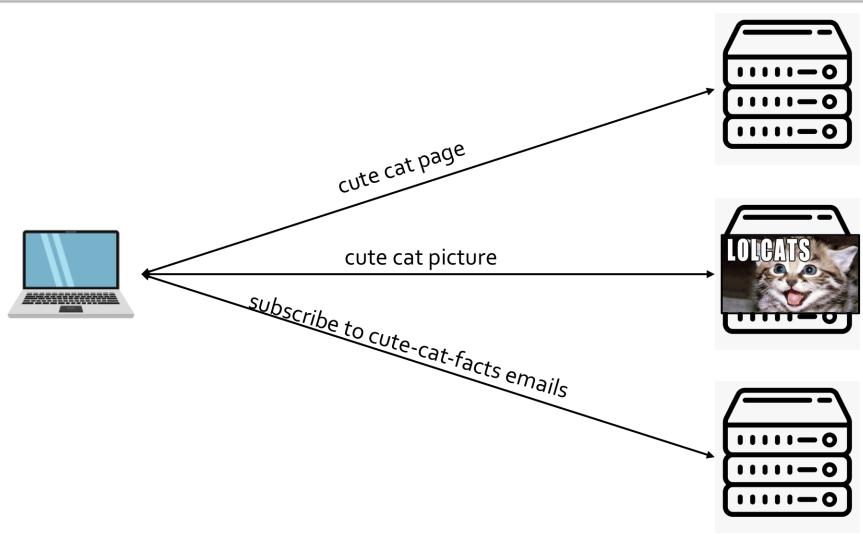






HTML Resource Fetching





Remote Content Fetching





Remote Content Fetching





Tracking Pixels





Tracking Pixels are images which encode cookie-like identifiers into the image URL.

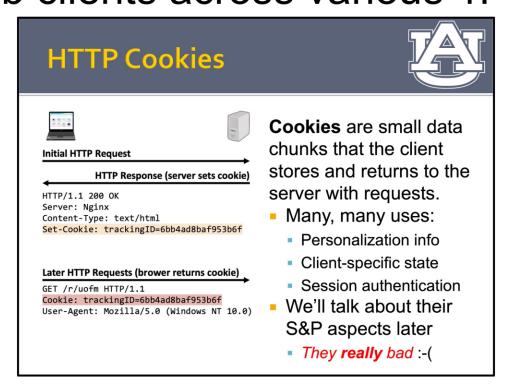
- Usually 1-5 pixels large
- Usually transparent

```
<img
  height="1"
  width="1"
  src="fb.com/img/id=784c39"
/>
```

3rd Party Web Cookies

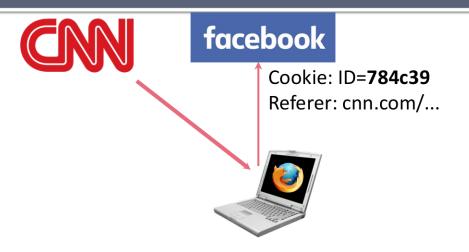


Third-Party Cookies are mechanism which allow non-obvious/undesired websites to track web clients across various 1P websites.



How 3rd Party Cookies Work





- User loads cnn.com
- CNN directs to load button from FB
 - Sets FB cookie



- User loads reddit.com
- Reddit directs to load button from FB
 - Reads FB cookie

How 3rd Party Cookies Work



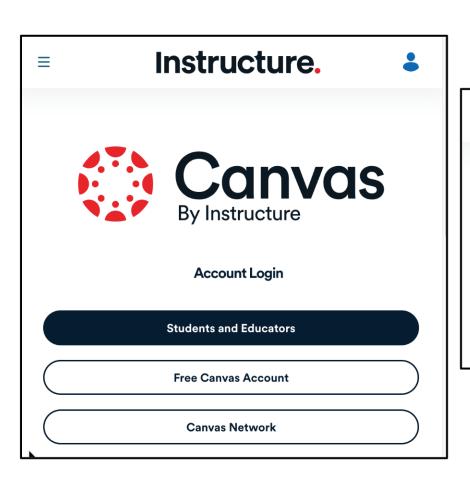


- User logs into Facebook
- FB cookie is sent along with credentials
- FB correlates
 ID/username

FB knows Alice went to CNN and Reddit

Advertising Cookies are EVERYWHERE









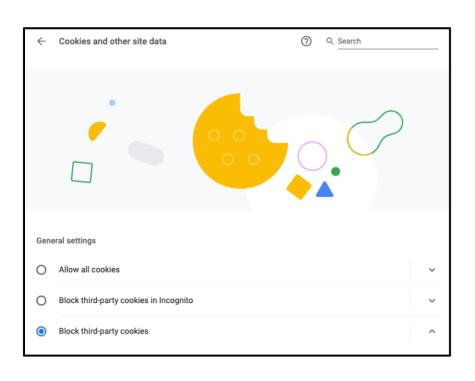
We may partner with ad networks and other ad serving providers ("Advertising Providers") that serve ads on behalf of us and others on non-affiliated platforms. Some of those ads may be personalized, meaning that they are intended to be relevant to you based on information Advertising Providers collect about your use of the Site and other sites over time, including information about relationships among different browsers and devices. This type of advertising is known as interest-based advertising.





Blocking 3rd Party Cookies





- Requests still made but no cookies sent
- Relatively few websites break if disabled
- Personal Experience:
 Requiring 3P cookies
 for basic functionality
 is a giant red-flag

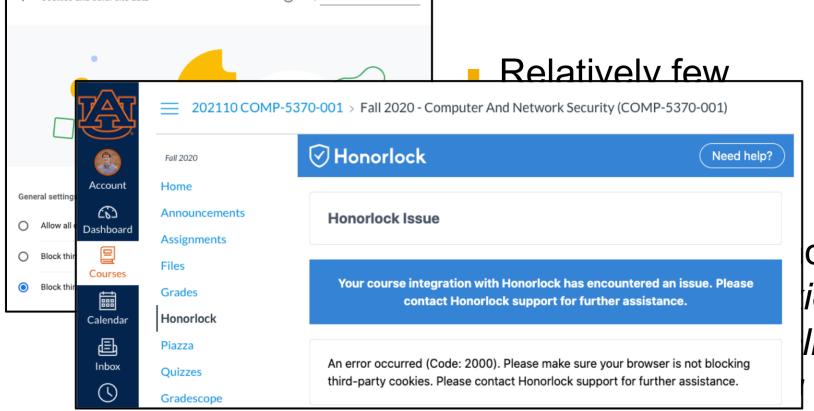
Blocking 3rd Party Cookies

Q Search

Cookies and other site data



 Requests still made but no cookies sent



ce:

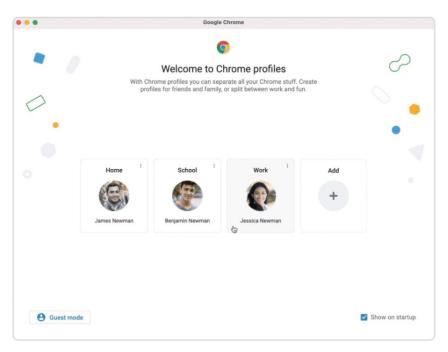
ies

lity

Browser-Level Isolation

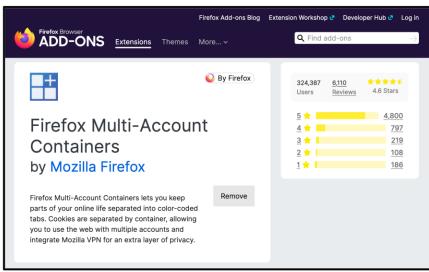


"Profiles"



 Manually-switched browser instances

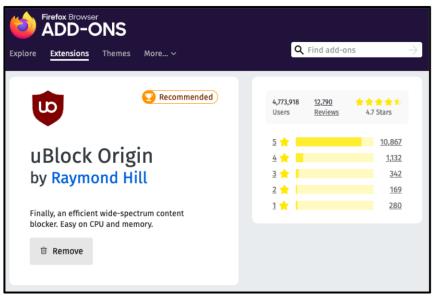
"Containers"

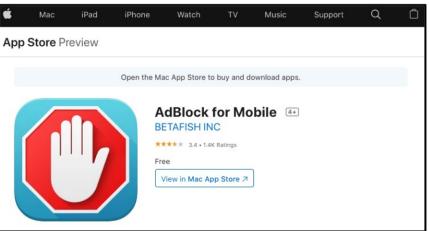


 Auto-switched cookies stores

Use an Ad-Blocker







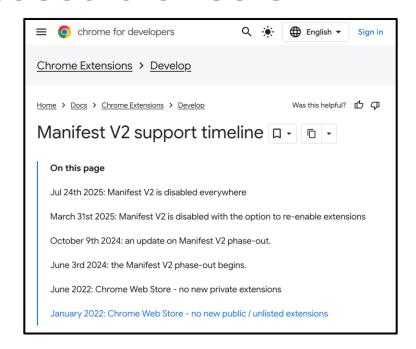
- Contains a list of known domains and URL patterns
- If a web request matches that list, it is blocked within the browser
- Very, very, very few websites break

Chromium Manifest v3



With the deprecation of Manifest API v2, adblockers have become significantly lessuseful in all Chromium-based browsers.

- Chromium, Chrome,
 Edge, Brave, etc
- Safari & Firefox not affected (directly)







Dynamic Privacy Extensions





- Dynamically decides whether to allow cookies and dynamic content
 - Most are behavior-based and not rule-based

Web Within the Web (email)





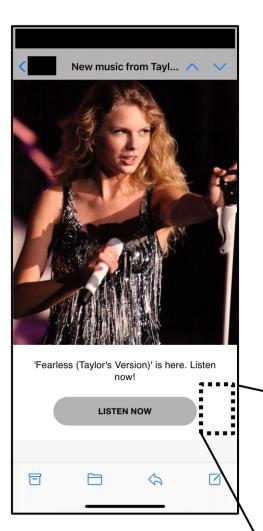
Email Tracking





Email Tracking





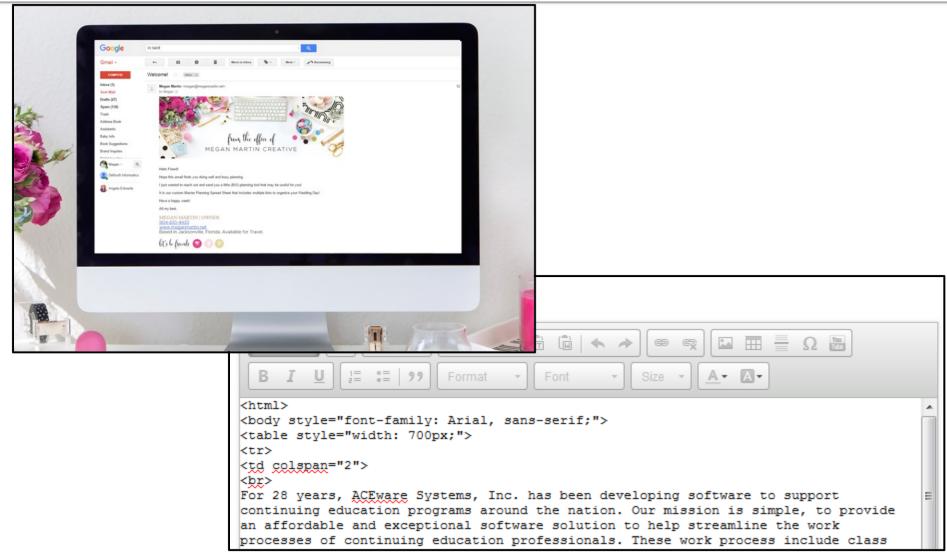
- Small, unnoticeable image in emails
- Image fetched by client when email is opened

LITERALLY HAVE NO OTHER PURPOSE

```
<img
height="1"
width="1"
src="bit.ly/3C4PGwG"
/>
```

Email Tracking









Disable Email Images



macOS Client

Load remote content in messages

Email messages may contain images or content stored on remote servers.

Gmail

Images:

Always display external images - Learn more
Ask before displaying external images - This option also disables dynamic email.

 Some services and clients allow you to block images

Sometimes they can but ignore setting

OUTLOOK

External images

Some external images can pose a security risk. Outlook helps protect your data by loading these images through our service. If you choose not have Outlook load your images, you risk exposing your device to malicious content.

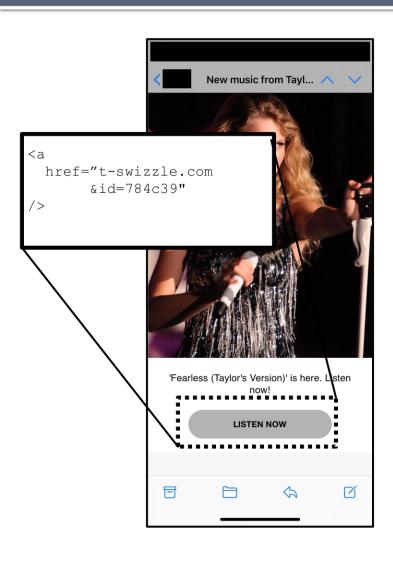
Learn more

- Always use the Outlook service to load images
- On't use the Outlook service to load images

 Some pretend to offer but only have partial support

Link Tracking

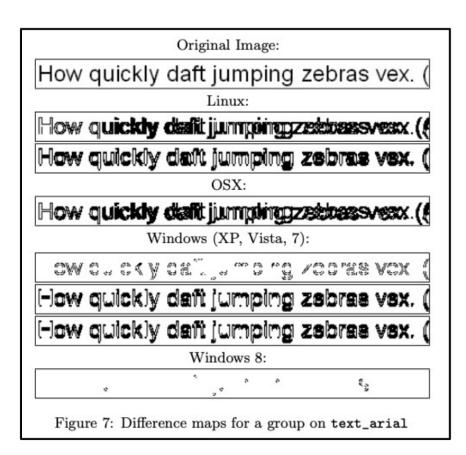




- Shady entities send custom link to users
- Used to connect email + 1P cookies
 - Service sets cookieX without knowing user
 - Service sends custom URL to Alice
 - When clicked service sees URL + cookieX

Browser Fingerprinting

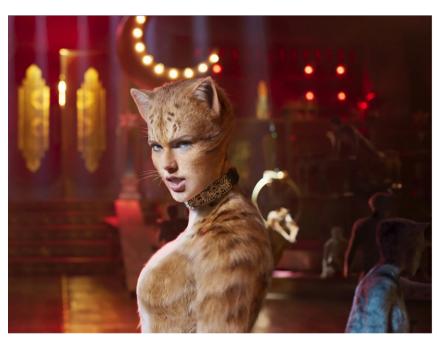




- Computers are not 100% deterministic
- Anything unique is a side-channel to the HW/SW used
- Uniqueness is an is an implicit identifier of user/computer/etc

GPU Fingerprinting Example





```
var screenshotTarget = document.body;
var imageCanvas = target.html2canvas(screenshotTarget);
var imgString = imageCanvas.toDataURL("image/png");
var ident = createHash('sha256').update(imageCanvas).digest();
```

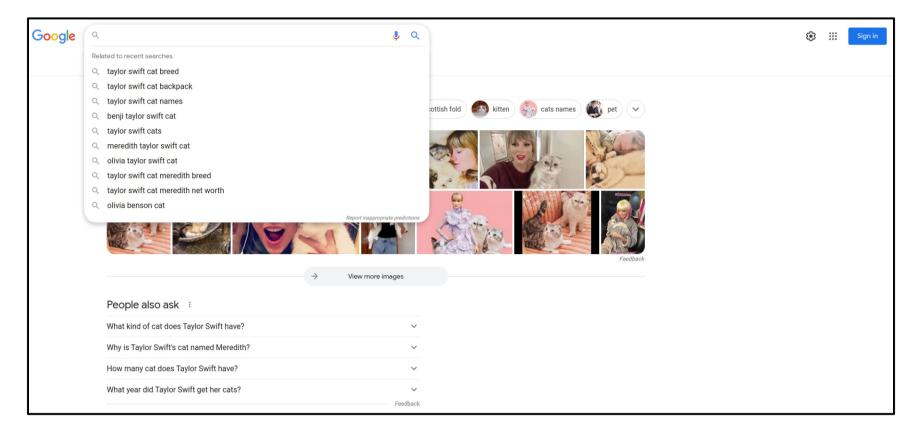
- Browser uses GPU to render picture
- GPU introduces uniqueness to image
- JS takes screenshot of image as shown
- Hash of screenshot is unique identifier for that computer's GPU





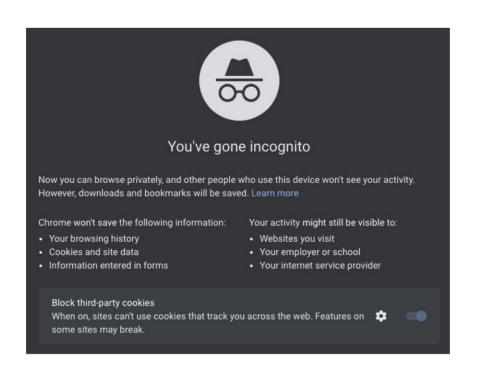


Sometimes, you don't want the server to know/remember who you are.



Private-Browsing Mode





- Meant for short-term usage
- Each instantiation is completely isolated
 - No cookies shared
 - No history
 - No cache
- Opening and closing profile clears most identifiers

Anonymity



Anonymity is the *concept* that any piece of information can not be tied to a real-world identity which it describes.

- Lots and lots of trade-offs when adding
- Lots of techniques but many are far-less useful than they appear

Anonymity in Datasets



Replacing Identifiers



BEFORE: Alice likes to look at cat pictures **AFTER:** user-123 likes to look at cat pictures

2006: AOL published "anonymized" queries

```
4417749 clothes for age 60
4417749 60 single men
4417749 best retirement city
4417749 jarret arnold
4417749 jack t. arnold
4417749 jaylene and jarrett arnold
4417749 gwinnett county yellow pages
4417749 rescue of older dogs
4417749 movies for dogs
4417749 mini strokes
4417749 dog that urinates on everything
```

A Face Is Exposed for AOL Searcher No. 4417749

By MICHAEL BARBARO and TOM ZELLER Jr. Published: August 9, 2006

Buried in a list of 20 million Web search queries collected by AOL and recently released on th 4417749. The number was assigned by the company to protect the searcher's anonymity, but i shield.



No. 4417749 conducted hundreds of searches over a three-mor ranging from "numb fingers" to "60 single men" to "dog that u

And search by search, click by click, the identity of AOL user N easier to discern. There are queries for "landscapers in Lilburn Arnold and "homes sold in shadow lake subdivision gwinnett of the control of the contr

It did not take much investigating to follow that data trail to Tl lives in Lilburn, Ga., frequently researches her friends' medical are my searches," she said, after a reporter read part of the list

AOL removed the search data from its site over the weekend at

Removing Identifiers



BEFORE: Alice likes to look at cat pictures **AFTER:** A user likes to look at cat pictures

2019: NYC published dataset for cab rides including pickup/drop-off location and other data

High Volume License Number	License Number	Base Name	App Company Affiliation
HV0002	B02914	VULCAN CARS LLC	Juno
HV0002	B02907	SABO ONE LLC	Juno
HV0002	B02908	SABO TWO LLC	Juno
HV0002	B03035	OMAHA LLC	Juno
HV0005	B02510	TRI-CITY.LLC	Lyft
HV0005	B02844	ENDOR CAR & DRIVER,LLC.	Lyft
HV0003	B02877	ZWOLF-NY, LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02866	ZWEI-NY.LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02882	ZWANZIG-NY.LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02869	ZEHN-NY.LLC.	Uber
HV0003	B02617	WEITER LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02876	VIERZEHN-NY, LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02865	VIER-NY.LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02512	UNTER LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02888	SIEBZEHN-NY.LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02864	SIEBEN-NY,LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02883	SECHZEHN-NY, LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02875	SECHS-NY, LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02682	SCHMECKEN LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02880	NEUNZEHN-NY, LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02870	NEUN-NY,LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02404	KUCHEN,LLC	Uber
HV0003	B02598	HINTER LLC	Uber

Removing Identifiers



BEFORE: Alice likes to look at cat pictures **AFTER:** A user likes to look at cat pictures



Addresses of pickups for rides that ended at strip clubs.

Tracking celebrities who people spotted getting into a cab at a particular place and time.



Bradley Cooper

Jessica Alba

K-Anonymity



K-anonymity is a less-awful way to anonymize data that *generalizes* it until no longer re-identifiable to a chosen degree.

BEFORE: Alice likes to look at cat pictures

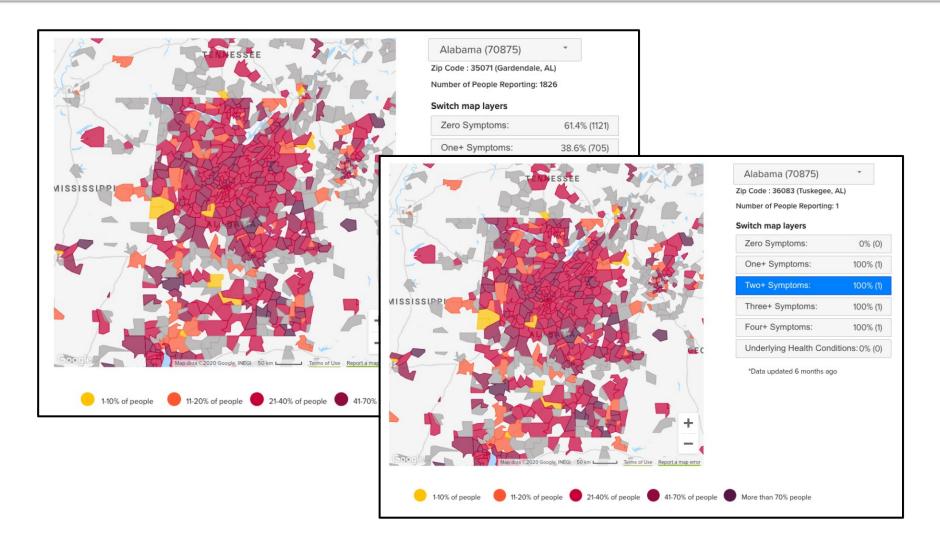
AFTER: In AL 8 ppl like to look at cat pictures

- Works well when questions are already known
- Other questions can't be answered due to granularity

1 00kt p. 010ki 00			
ZIP	DOD	Disease	
902**	1987	Cancer	
902**	1987	Cancer	
902**	1987	Cancer	
902**	1954	Heart Disease	
902**	1954	GI Disease	
902**	1954	Died of poison apple	
904**	1978	Heart Disease	
904**	1978	Cancer	
904**	1978	Cancer	

K-Anonymity Depends on K



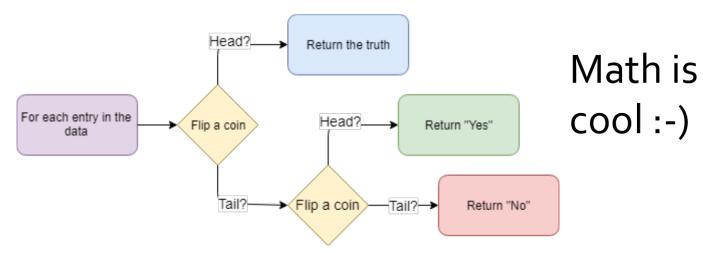


Differential Privacy



Differential Privacy is a technique in which a dataset can contain partially incorrect data on an individual but it is simultaneously:

- Guaranteed to be correct as-a-whole
- Impossible to attribute to an individual



Computer and Network Security

Lecture 20: Web Privacy

COMP-5370/6370 Fall 2025

