Internet Browsers Increasingly Competing on Privacy Controls
 Privacy focus means more choice for consumers protecting their personal data

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Internet browser developers are increasingly competing to offer the most robust privacy controls, a new report by the Center for Democracy & Technology finds. This new competitive focus on privacy represents a boon to consumers who can now base their Web surfing decisions on which browser best suits their personal privacy needs.

The report reviews and compares the privacy tools available for the latest versions of Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Apple's Safari. The report compares the browsers in their offering of three key tools -- privacy mode, cookie controls and object controls - which can greatly reduce the amount of personal information users give up online and leave behind on their computers.

"This rising tide of privacy-based competition is good news for consumers, who now face real choices regarding which browsers best serve their privacy needs," said Alissa Cooper, CDT's Chief Computer Scientist and co-author of the report. "These tools aren't perfect, but the fact that companies are competing with one another to offer the best privacy protections is an extremely positive development."

The browsers varied considerably in how they implemented the three major privacy tools detailed in the report. Those distinctions pose a serious choice to consumers seeking to choose a browser that matches their privacy preferences.

"With more robust privacy tools being included in each new browser release, it falls to consumers to educate themselves about what is available and make informed choices that protect their personal information," CDT Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Ari Schwartz said. "The way to spur even greater competition on privacy is for a large portion of consumers to make educated decisions based on privacy controls."

Schwartz added that industry-driven privacy efforts remain only a part of a broader national privacy agenda. "Industry plays a key role, but we still need a robust national privacy law to fully protect Americans," he said.

Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Mozilla verified the accuracy of the claims made in the report about their browser software. The full Browser Report can be found online here: http://www.cdt.org/privacy/20081022_browser_priv.pdf [1]

Contact: Brock Meeks
(202) 637-9800 x 114
brock@cdt.org [2]

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