

Google Is Listening To You and Saving What You Say

August 23, 2017 - It has been over a year since we first reported on the amount of data that Google is collecting on just about everyone. We also told our readers how to limit or delete data the company was collection. But since that report some things have changedâ€ not necessarily for the good. The company is collecting more data than most people think and, quite frankly, when you look at what is stored it may seem a little creepy.

Tweet

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(function() {
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];
s.type = 'text/javascript';
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);
})();
```

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(function() {
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po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);
})();
```

Google's Assistant is a program that is built into Android phones. It is also built into a number of devices that you can purchase. In order for these devices to work properly, they need to be tied to your Google account. This is done via your Gmail account login.

What's that? You say you don't have Gmail? Well, if you have an Android phone, you do. And that means that Google is storing your information. Using the default settings on your phone, the company is keeping track of you. Watching where you go, what you search for on the internet, what websites you visit, what you type, the texts you send, etcâ€

If you are like me and absolutely hate the small virtual keyboard on your phone, you may have decided that rather than typing thinks out, you'll just use voice recognition to do the typing for you. I almost never type my text messages. Instead, I hit the "mike" key on the phones keyboard and start talking. The same is true the email messages I send. I've even been known to do this to create MS Word documents. It's just easier that using a keyboard built for a Lilliputian.

Over the past month, the technology I'm using to do all of this has changes somewhat. The operating system on my cell phone has been upgraded. And I've started experimenting around with Google's assistant - which was built into the new version of the operating system. Because of this, I decided that it might be time to check the "my activity" page belonging to me at Google. What I found startled me.

Last year, I turned off the location tracking feature along with some other things that I felt were privacy intrusive. None of those settings changed since my last visit. But what had been added were recordings of all of my text messages, as well as voice searches I'd made using Google. Even text messages that I had deleted from my phone still had voice counterparts stored on Google.

There are a number of privacy issues that this brings up. For instance, someone who gains access to your recorded texts

on Google may be able to get enough information to artificially recreate your voice. Nothing bad could happen with that, right? Prank phone calls? Or worse, stalking phone calls? If nothing else, I found the discovery of this disconcerting.

While I don't like the fact that Google is doing this type of data collection, at least they are fairly transparent about it and they give users the ability to delete it. Not all companies are quite that open. If you are interested in seeing the information Google is storing on you, sign into your Gmail account in any browser and then go to <http://history.google.com/history>. All of the stored information will be displayed, along with the controls to change what the company will collect and store in the future.

by Jim Malmberg

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