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Broadband's Impact

Tuesday, June 2nd, 2009

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Securing New Infrastructure Will Require Watchful Eye, Experts Say

By Douglas Streeks, Reporter-Researcher, BroadbandCensus.com

WASHINGTON, June 2, 2009 - Balancing privacy and security will require a delicate approach as the internet becomes more pervasive in the lives of everyday Americans, said a panel of national security policy experts on the first day of the Computers Freedom & Privacy conference at George Washington University.

The curtain is the most privacy enhancing technology in the world, said panel moderator Ryan Singel, but it also allow citizens to do what they want without being watched, and this decreases security, "but there's no law against curtains." This is a balance between individual privacy rights and the government's rights to come into your house, he said.

There is "a lot more transparency" between today's government and the people when it comes to privacy in today's political environment, said BT chief security technology officer Bruce Schneier. But increased transparency does not always come with a fair exchange, he warned.

While increased access to government data can promote liberty, Schneier added that voluntary disclosure of information can allow more government control – requiring a delicate balancing of both parties' interests. "Security is liberty plus privacy," he said.

Schneier referred to data and its secondary uses as the modern equivalent of pollution in the information age. The best way to maintain security is through oversight, he said. And increased use of networks can have the negative effect of opening up new vulnerabilities, Cato Institute director of information policy studies Jim Harper said: "The democratization of technology "creates more opportunities for people to use it in a way that's not good for society."

Because the pace of new technology development is unpredictable, Schneier agreed that absent a watchful eye, online resources American use for ordinary purposes — including social networking sites like Facebook — might "creep up on us" and become "critical infrastructure,"

But Stewart Baker, a former general counsel for the National Security Agency, took issue with both Harper and Schneier's jabs and worries about the exercise of government power in the name of security. Distrust of government in cyber security is often misdirected against those who defend – not the attackers who deserve it, he said.



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