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CSCC Cloud Privacy Summit (Update)

This information and registration page for this event, mentioned in the last KIT (see below) is now open. The meeting fee (if you only attend this event, not the OMG meetings the same week) is only $99.

The Cloud Standards Security Council (CSCC) will present an information day on privacy in the cloud on March 26 in Reston, Va. (co-located with the OMG meeting). The focus, especially given the location, will be on the use of the cloud in the public sector, but the event will contain plenty of useful information (both regulatory and technical) for cloud users in commercial domains, including healthcare and finance.

LASER 2015

It's not just exiled emperors who go to Elba! The Twelfth LASER Summer School on Software Engineering will take place at the Hotel del Golfo on the famous island, off the coast of Italy (across from Pisa), on September 7-13. The theme this year if "Concurrency: the Next Frontiers." The program details are not published yet, but the list of speakers is, and registration is open.

Applicative

Another conference on software will take place on Feb. 25-27 in New York City. Applicative is ACM's conference "designed for software developers interested in the latest in emerging technologies and techniques. The conference consists of two tracks, one looking at systems-level programming and the other at application development."

"You Have No Privacy, Get Over It!"

This was the famous reply given by Sun Microsystems's CEO Scott McNealy to an interviewer many years ago, at a time when social media didn't even exist yet.

The idea of "anonymizing" data as a protection against privacy violations, when using the data for research and forecasts, seems attractive. However, new research indicates that correlations between various activities of a typical consumer can be used to defeat the anonymization of retail transaction data. The research paper carries the half-catchy, half-nerdy title *"Unique in the shopping mall: On the reidentifiability of credit card metadata"* and is co-authored by faculty from the MIT Media Lab, Aarhus University and Rutgers University.

You should skip the overview in the Wall Street Journal, with its paywall and its inaccuracies (they should stick to writing about business), and go to the free and full source in Science Magazine.

An Eye for the Obvious

Here comes an earth-shattering revelation from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, which concludes in a report issued on January 27 that "Internet-connected devices present serious data security and privacy risks." The authors could have saved hours of discussion by reading various articles in the KIT over the past 18 months.

And if you thought that realization might lead to action, the New York Times review explains that the report "does not carry the weight of enforceable regulations" and that the FTC "has urged Congress to enact a baseline federal consumer privacy law" but "such legislation is unlikely to pass with Congress controlled by Republicans."

The report appears to focus more on the invasion of privacy by companies that collect consumer information than on malicious use by hackers, although it also mentions this aspect.

→ Seen Recently...

"Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful."

-- George Box

"A physicist is one who is concerned with the truth. An engineer is one who's concerned with getting the job done."

-- J. Presper Eckert Jr., co-inventor of ENIAC
from the Eckert oral history at the Charles Babbage Institute
as told by Walter Isaacson in his book "The Innovators."