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Erratum and Discussion

In the previous issue (No. 186), we wrote that Grace Hopper had "invented the COBOL language." A faithful reader wrote back that she wasn't actually the inventor, but an advisor to the committee that defined the language.

In issue No. 185, we wrote that if the EU-US privacy shield is invalidated by the new U.S. administration's orders that deny privacy protection to non-U.S. citizens, U.S. cloud providers "could be denied the right to host the files and e-mail accounts of European citizens." The same faithful reader asked whether this should not say "host *outside of the E.U.* the files..." It's unfortunately more complicated than that. As two court cases against Microsoft and Google have shown, U.S. law enforcement agencies claim the right to inspect data held in the EU about U.S. citizens. If they consider foreigners to have even less privacy rights than American citizens, they they would presumably ask a U.S. company to provide records held by a foreign citizen in a data center in, say, Ireland. It doesn't help that the initial judgments in the Microsoft and Google cases went in opposite directions, almost ensuring a prolonged escalation to higher judicial authorities, perhaps eventually to the U.S Supreme Court

Color-Coded, Cloud-Controlled Keyboard

Das Keyboard, the company that brought us a few years ago a mechanical keyboard without key markings -- a brilliant if initially disconcerting way to encourage us to touch-type and look at the screen, not the keys -- is launching a Kickstarter campaign for its new invention, Das Keyboard 5Q. This keyboard's LEDs can be programmed to display each key in a different color (and with blinking effects) to serve as alert. For example, the "B" key can be turned red when an e-mail comes from your boss. So it's a keyboard that doubles as a dashboard for your important tasks and alerts. Watch the video here.

Three ACM Resources

From the latest offering by the Association for Computer Machinery:

- Core Services on Amazon Web Services, a Skillsoft course. "Learn about services and features to enable you to host your service with confidence."
- Doing Data Science, from Safari Books Online. "If you're familiar with linear algebra, probability, and statistics, and have programming experience, this book is an ideal introduction to data science."
- Certified Ethical Hacker: Hacking and Penetration Testing. The first in a series which can used in preparation for the Certified Ethical Hacker 312-50 exam.

Coming to an Amusement Park Near You

Disney Research (yes, there is such a thing) has demonstrated the ability to charge a device wirelessly anywhere in a room, as opposed to laying it flat on a transmitting coil, without creating harmful electric fields. If you use the name Disney gave the technology, Quasistatic Cavity Resonance (QSCR), it sounds even more impressive. See the Computerworld article.

Data Residency Discussion Paper Update

The joint paper on data residency by the Object Management Group and the Cloud Standards Customer Council is undergoing a review phase, and will be proposed for adoption by the relevant OMG Task Force on March 23. KIT readers who are not on the OMG or CSCC mailing lists are welcome to ask for a copy and provide feedback.

The Politics of Preserving Information

In a world where we don't have lies but "alternative facts," what's a scientist to do? One answer may be the "Data Rescue" project organized by several colleges and libraries in February, aimed at preserving data that the new U.S. administration is busily removing from its Web sites. Climate change studies appear to be the prime targets of such efforts. The preservation project is focusing on the Web sites of the Department of Energy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Seen Recently...

"Keep calm and cloud on."

-- Mike Kavis, @madgreek65

"Give a contract to the best ones and let them do what they know. Or else, contract the cheapest ones and make them do what you decide."

-- Alejandro Gou, @alex-gou, Mexican theatre producer and director, probably not thinking of IT but still showing that there are universal truths