Packet #5

Imagine you are working on a research paper about **digital identity and issues with online privacy**. Read the three information sources that follow this page and keep the CAARP model in mind as you review each source.

Remember:
C = Currency
A = Authority
A = Accuracy
R = Relevance
P = Purpose

For the third and final source you will see the address (URL) of a website. Click on that link to be taken to a website. Please review the website as a whole for your third and final source.

To complete your assignment, go to: http://library.uncw.edu/instruction/UNI_library_assignment. Login at the bottom of the page and follow the directions to answer questions about each information source.

Social Networking Ethics: Developing Best Practices for the New Small World

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Emerging trends online, and especially in social network sites, may be creating an environment for psychologists where transparency is increasingly unavoidable. Thus, most psychological practitioners may now have to engage in *small world ethics*—ethical acuity that requires an application of ethical principles to the increasingly interconnected and transparent world that is burgeoning from online culture. Fortunately, rural psychology has already provided a helpful roadmap for how to demonstrate flexibility and prudence when applying ethical principles in cultures with great transparency. Therefore, professional psychologists and psychologists in training may need to draw upon this wisdom when conceptualizing best online practices for the field that relate to social networking and personal online activity. To remain relevant, psychotherapy must adapt to the new digital culture but maintain its identity as a profession guided by its historical values and ethical principles.

Keywords: ethics, Internet, self-disclosure, social networking, best practices

A new era is emerging where people are willing to disclose personal information online through social networking websites (SNSs) to a degree that seems disconcerting to many psychologists. A digital culture is burgeoning where many online users may misjudge the accessibility of their online social networks (Strater & Richter, 2007) and may initiate online relationships even if perceived trust and perceived privacy are low (Dwyer, Hiltz, & Passerini, 2007). Rosenblum (2006) stated that SNS "users are communicating in their virtual underwear with few inhibitions" (p. 45). Therefore, there is warrant for examining psychologists' personal use of SNSs outside of the therapy hour and its impact on psychologists' reputation and credibility (Van Allen & Roberts, 2011). To adapt to this new era, psychotherapy must be knowl-

edgeable about and open to the new digital culture, but it must also maintain its values and ethical principles. Now, the challenge will be for the entire profession to make a shift where it learns to adapt to the increasingly interconnected "small world" that the Internet and SNSs have created.

The contrast between psychotherapy and SNSs could not be starker. Whereas most psychotherapeutic interactions are private and confidentially protected, most interactions on SNSs are broadcast to the public or to a network of friends. Interacting in both spheres necessarily contains risks for psychologists and their clients. Those encountering online dilemmas may benefit from considering the unlikely analogue of rural psychological practice (Lehavot, 2010; Zur, 2006; Zur, Williams, Lehavot, & Knapp, 2009), as these professionals have been navigating dilemmas surrounding self-disclosures and boundary violations for years (Hargrove, 1982, 1986; Hargrove & Breazeale, 1993). Adapting to the new culture wisely will necessarily involve both understanding the ethical principles themselves as well as developing competence in the technology of the burgeoning digital culture. Psychologists in different stages of their careers may exhibit different combinations of strengths and weaknesses in both facets. Some professionals may be ethically astute, but struggle to keep up with the technology. Others may be technologically astute, but struggle to hold salient the values of psychotherapy that may run counter to the social norms and practices of social media.

Social Networking and Professional Psychology

Social media is a broad term that refers to websites that use collaborative applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content online (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These websites may include, but are not limited to, SNSs (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn), publishing media (e.g., Wordpress, Blogger, Wikipedia), content sharing (e.g., YouTube, Flickr, Digg, Last.fm), discussion (e.g., Yahoo Messenger, Google Talk,

Skype), microblogging (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr, Posterous), livestreaming (e.g., Friendfeed, Lifestream), livecasting (e.g., Livestream), and virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life, There; see Hunt, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNSs are a specific type of social media that allow "individuals to (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (para. 4). The use of SNSs has rapidly increased in recent years and is becoming normative for the American population. Madden and Zickuhr (2011) of the Pew Research Center found that 65% of online adults—or 50% of all adults—currently use SNSs. This is an increase from 8% of online adults using SNSs in 2005 and an increase from 46% of online adults using SNSs in 2009 (Lenhart, 2009). Facebook, currently the most used SNS for American adults 18 years and older, is accessed by 901 million monthly active users worldwide with 527 million active users logging on to Facebook on any given day (Facebook, 2012c).

Psychological professionals increasingly use SNSs (Taylor, McMinn, Bufford, & Chang, 2010), as Internet trends are part of psychology's mainstream culture (Lehavot, 2010). Lehavot, Barnett, and Powers (2010) found that 81% of psychology graduate students reported having an online social networking profile, and 33% of those students used Facebook. Furthermore, the American Psychological Association (APA; Anderson, 2010) has reported that it intends to use SNSs to promote psychology and communicate with large numbers of people. It is already doing so with a Facebook page that currently registers more than 32,000 followers (Facebook, 2012a).

There is evidence that there are age-related differences in SNS usage. Madden and Zickuhr (2011) found that younger Americans are significantly more likely than any other age group to use SNSs, with a usage rate of 83% for adults aged 18–29 years. Even though usage rates for older adults are smaller than for younger adults, they are increasing. Despite the fact that only 33% of adults aged 65 and older used SNSs in 2011, this was a 150% increase from 2009 (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011). These age-related differences in online activity are present among psychologists as well. Taylor et al. (2010) found that although more than three out of every four doctoral-level psychology students use SNSs often to communicate with friends and family, most established psychologists do not often use them.

Because of their increased SNS usage, it is likely that younger psychologists may be inviting online-specific dilemmas at greater rates than their more seasoned colleagues. It is also possible that older psychologists—who often serve as supervisors, instructors, and consultants to younger psychologists—may not be adequately equipped to address many of the emerging online dilemmas that are occurring with their younger colleagues and trainees due to their lack of experience with the new technology. Indeed, there is some evidence that younger professionals may already be navigating these ethical waters with limited guidance. Chretien, Greysen, Chretien, and Kind (2009) found that 60% of medical schools in their sample reported instances of medical students posting unprofessional online content, which included disclosure of patient confidentiality, profanity, discriminatory language, depiction of intoxication, and sexually suggestive material. Furthermore, DiLillo and Gale (2011) found that 98% of doctoral psychology

students had searched for at least one client's information over the past year, even though most reported that searching for clients online was "always" or "usually" unacceptable.

Applying Small World Ethics to the Social Networking Era

Social networking may be ushering in a "small world" online environment that is analogous to "small world" rural settings where psychologists have encountered more transparency than their urban counterparts for years (Hargrove, 1982, 1986; Helbock, Marinelli, & Walls, 2006; Morrison, 1979; Roberts, Battaglia, & Epstein, 1999). Although the landscape of SNSs and rural environments could not seem more different from each other, there are important similarities; both are characterized with pervasive incidental contact, inevitable self-disclosure, and unavoidable multiple relationships. For example, just as transparency in rural communities may involve increased knowledge of a psychologist's whereabouts, some SNSs tag photos with exact GPS coordinates of where they were taken (Nicholson, 2011).

Given that the APA has not historically included ethical guidelines for areas of rapid technological change (Taylor et al., 2010); it may be helpful for SNS users to apply rural wisdom to the new digital culture that is evolving (Lehavot, 2010; Zur, 2008; Zur et al., 2009). Although the APA (Martin, 2010) has already communicated some ethical guidance concerning SNSs, many professional psychologists and practitioners in training have not adequately addressed issues of self-disclosure on the Internet (Lehavot, 2010) or their associated ethical implications (McMinn, Bearse, Heyne, Smithberger, & Erb, 2011). Thus, psychologists actively participating in SNSs may essentially need to adapt small world ethical thinking when navigating therapeutic relationships in an environment with unavoidable self-disclosure.

Small world ethical thinking refers to a psychologist's heightened awareness that her environment will likely produce ethical dilemmas surrounding boundary violations related to online realities such as greater transparency, increased self-disclosure, and unavoidable multiple relationships. In rural settings, completely avoiding self-disclosures and multiple relationships is not always possible (Brownlee, 1996; Campbell & Gordon, 2003; Roberts et al., 1999; Zur, 2006). Nevertheless, rural practice has demonstrated that certain boundary violations may not necessarily be unmanageable (Faulkner & Faulkner, 1997), unhealthy (Zur et al., 2009), or slippery slopes that lead to client harm (Gottlieb & Younggren, 2009). Yet, they do require careful prevention and management.

Preventing and Managing Boundary Violations Online

Psychologists are guided and inspired by three fundamental ethical principles that apply directly to setting appropriate boundaries online: beneficence, nonmaleficence, and integrity (APA, 2010; Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). Together these principles and suggestions help flesh out APA Ethical Standard 5.04, which advises psychologists to take appropriate precautions regarding their dissemination of public advice and comments via media that includes the Internet. First, psychologists must consider the risks and rewards that their online activity might have on their clients.

Second, the principle of integrity inspires psychologists to be upfront and honest in therapy about the potential role confusion that could occur from online interactions with clients.

Although professional psychologists are afforded autonomy regarding their personal online use, it may be naïve for psychologists to believe that their "private" online activity will never intersect with attributions of their professional competence. The APA Ethics Code reflects the reality of this tension. On the one hand, the APA Ethics Code (APA, 2010) "applies only to psychologists' activities that are part of their scientific, education, or professional roles as psychologists" (p. 1061), and makes a distinction between guiding professional behaviors and "purely private conduct of psychologists" (p. 1061). Yet on the other hand, APA Ethical Standard 2.06 (2010) acknowledges that personal problems can interfere with psychologists' professional duties.

Indeed, online self-disclosures may represent the intersection where dilemmas surrounding personal and professional roles meet—in some cases signaling the genesis of boundary violations. Kaslow, Patterson, and Gottlieb (2011) noted that with self-disclosure online, "the client's *perception* of the relationship may become a more casual or even social one that may violate the boundaries or context of therapy as a sanctuary for exploring personal issues" (p. 106). Zur et al. (2009) noted that self-disclosures may have implications for therapeutic outcomes—being appropriate, benign, or inappropriate—and can occur in three ways: (a) *deliberate*—disclosures that are intentional and avoidable, (b) *unavoidable*—disclosures that are inescapable but generally expected, and (c) *accidental*—disclosures that are both unavoidable and unexpected.

Unfortunately, self-disclosure online is almost inevitable (Zur, 2008) and is often client-initiated as clients try to learn about their therapists from their websites, or may be increasingly more invasive, including Google searches, joining SNSs, joining professional Listservs/chat rooms, paying for online background checks or online firms to conduct illegal, invasive searches (Zur, 2008; Zur et al., 2009). Fox (2009) found that 61% of American adults report looking online for health information, and Lehavot et al. (2010) found that 7% of student psychotherapists reported that a client disclosed that he or she obtained online information about them.

An accurate assessment of the private or public nature of SNSs is a primary consideration in limiting self-disclosure dilemmas for psychologists online (Lehavot, 2010). Many SNS users are unaware of the security of their personal online information (Barnes, 2006). Strater and Richter (2007) found that college students showed an all-or-nothing approach to online privacy, either actively managing their privacy standards strictly or not at all. This would be a disturbing trend if it generalized to professional psychology, because the type of personal information available online may be very extensive (Zur, 2008; Zur et al., 2009). Clients may potentially discover online information about their therapist that includes legal information, private phone numbers and addresses, household composition, the value and structure of a psychologists' home (and photographs), ratings of a therapist by other clients, blog postings, personal images, videos, professional and personal websites, news articles written by or about therapists, professional publications and research articles, and links to social media profiles.

In addition to understanding online self-disclosures, psychologists may need to prepare themselves to navigate potential online boundary violations by becoming familiar with the nature of multiple relationships (Barnett, Lazarus, Vasquez, Moorhead-Slaughter, & Johnson, 2007; Borys & Pope, 1989; Ebert, 1997; Pipes, 1997) and ethical decision-making models (Gottlieb, 1993; Kitchener, 1984). According to the American Psychological Association (2010), multiple relationships occur when a psychologist is currently in a professional role with a person and either is simultaneously in or promises to be in another role with that person or someone closely associated with that person. Barnett et al. (2007) highlighted that avoiding client-exploitation requires making sure that multiple relationships are not enacted to meet the psychologists' own needs. Kitchener (1988) recommended that psychologists consider three issues that increase the risk that multiple relationships will harm clients—incompatibility of expectations between client and psychologist, increased commitments in nontherapeutic roles, and power differentials between psychologist and client.

Ethical dilemmas encountered in rural environments may provide insights into the unique dilemmas SNS users will encounter online. Schank and Skovholt (1997) described four types of rural dilemmas that involve multiple-role relationships—overlapping social relationships, overlapping business/professional relationships, overlapping relationships involving the psychologists' family, and overlapping relationships involving the psychologists' clients with other clients. Similar dilemmas may increasingly become characteristic of online environments as well. For example, Taylor et al. (2010) describe unsettling situations where psychologists in training had either matched with current/former clients through anonymous dating websites or found pictures of clients on the websites of family and friends. Thus, understanding the nature of small world ethical dilemmas from rural psychological practice may inform psychologists engaging SNSs in preparing to shift their ethical focus from solely avoiding nonprofessional contact with individuals to learning effective ways of managing nonprofessional contacts in ways that decrease the potential for harmful multiple relationships to occur (Faulkner & Faulkner, 1997).

Suggestions for Best Practices Online

Although SNSs can be meaningful resources for connecting with family and friends (Bratt, 2010), it is suggested that APA begin to develop a guideline of best practices (Burke & Cheng, 2011; McMinn et al., 2011) to ensure that practitioners use SNSs in ways that benefit their clients, themselves, and the reputation of psychological practice. As a start to this process, APA may consider creating guidelines to inform SNS use that consider boundary management, technological competence, and professional/personal liability.

Managing Boundaries Online

Online relationships may be similar to in-personal relationships, and thus have potential impacts on the therapeutic relationship (Barnett, 2008). Setting appropriate boundaries with clients helps avoid conflicts of interests (Canadian Psychological Association, 2008) and may be helped by several sugges-

tions. First, it may be increasingly necessary to create and maintain a formal SNS policy that is made transparent to clients in the informed consent process (Barnett, 2008; Burke & Cheng, 2011; Damsteeg, Murray, & Johnson, 2012; Lehavot et al., 2010; Tunick, Mednick, & Conroy, 2011). In lieu of specific APA guidelines surrounding SNS policies, it may be helpful to consult policies of other health organizations. See Table 1 for list of online resources. Informed consent processes may include at the very least an acknowledgment of the risks and benefits of using SNSs and other technology (American Counseling Association, 2005). In addition, it may be advisable to include expectations about SNS usage, namely that practitioners do not "friend" or interact with clients on SNSs (Kolmes, 2010). It is also advisable that practitioners inform clients that they do not search for them online unless the client has given consent or it is part of a clinical treatment plan (Barnett, 2008; Clinton, Silverman, & Brendel, 2010; Lehavot et al., 2010; Tunick et al., 2011).

Second, in most cases it is prudent to avoid forming multiple relationships with clients online (American Medical Association, 2010; Bratt, 2010). Yet, understanding that there may be necessary exceptions to this guideline, psychologists experiencing a multiple relationship dilemma may want to consider Younggren and Gottlieb's (2004) questions:

1. Is entering into a relationship in addition to the professional one necessary, or should I avoid it?

2. Can the dual relationship potentially cause harm to the patient?

3. If harm seems unlikely or avoidable, would the additional relationship prove beneficial?

4. Is there a risk that the dual relationship could disrupt the therapeutic relationship?

5. Can I evaluate this matter objectively?

Many practitioners may not be aware that harmful multiple relationships online are possibilities when they initiate a Google search on a client. Thus, it is important for practitioners to understand that searching for clients online or on SNSs without their clients' permission may itself be a boundary violation. It may be important for practitioners to develop other self-monitoring strategies such as consulting with colleagues and supervisors (Gabbard, Kassaw, & Perez-Garcia, 2011). Moreover, Clinton, Silverman, and Brendel's (2010) offer six pragmatic questions that practitioners can ask themselves that help frame the decision of whether to Google a client/patient:

1. Why do I want to conduct this search?

2. Would my search advance or compromise the treatment?

3. Should I obtain informed consent from the patient?

Table 1
Social Media Policies and Facebook Privacy Resources

Resource category	Description	Citation	URL
Sample social media policies	Social media policy of American Medical Association	American Medical Association, 2010	http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/meeting/professionalism-social-media.shtml
	214 examples of social media policies from a variety of organizations	Boudreaux, 2009	http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies.php
	Social media policy of a private practitioner, as published by American Psychological Association Insurance Trust	Kolmes, 2010	http://www.apait.org/apait/resources/articles/kolmessocmed.pdf
Adjusting Facebook privacy settings	Guide to Facebook privacy settings from Consumer Reports	Consumer Reports, 2012	http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/06/facebook-your-privacy/index.htm#editor
	Instructions on how to download an archive of your personal Facebook information that is online	Facebook, 2012b	https://www.facebook.com/help/?page = 116481065103985
	Guide to Facebook privacy settings from an independent market research company	Lee, 2009	http://www.insidefacebook.com/2009/05/13/facebook-privacy-guide/
	Guide to Facebook privacy settings from an associate professor of Information Studies at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	Zimmer, 2012	http://michaelzimmer.org/2012/05/07/how-to-adjust-your-facebook-privacy-settings-2012/

4. Should I share the results of the search with the patient?

5. Should I document the findings of the search in the medical record?

6. How do I monitor my motivations and the ongoing risk-benefit profile of searching? (pp. 105–107)

Third, just as it is important to separate professional roles from personal relationships, it may be prudent to separate professional and personal profiles online on SNSs (American Medical Association, 2010; Myers, Endres, Ruddy, & Zelikovsky, 2012), including only professional information on professional SNS profiles (Bratt, 2010). Finally, because of the transparent nature of SNSs, discussions of client case studies online should be done extremely cautiously, if not avoided altogether (Van Allan & Roberts, 2011).

Developing Technological Competence Online

To be both proactive and protective online, it may be helpful for psychologists to achieve a degree of technological competence before engaging with SNSs (McMinn et al., 2011; Ragusea & VandeCreek, 2003). Just as it is necessary for psychologists to understand the cultural context of the environment in which they live and work, it is necessary that psychologists understand the nature and requisite technology of SNSs. Furthermore, because clients are likely to use SNSs it may be helpful for psychologists to understand the phenomena of SNSs, even if they do not participate themselves (Myers et al., 2012).

First, psychologists would be wise to be aware of what information is currently available for clients' viewing online. It is wise to periodically search for one's name online to be aware what clients might find if doing a similar search (Taylor et al., 2010; Zur, 2008), or even to set up Google alerts to get instant alerts when one's name is mentioned in a new online posting (Zur et al., 2009). In addition, Facebook users are now able to download their Facebook information to see what information Facebook holds (Facebook, 2012b). When inappropriate personal information is discovered online, practitioners may want to contact the poster of the information and/or website administrator (Gabbard et al., 2011).

Second, it is sensible to be proactive in setting controls that limit who sees your personal information. It is recommended that practitioners set security levels on SNSs as high as possible (American Medical Association, 2010; Lehavot et al., 2010; Myers et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2010), allowing for friend-only access (Barnett, 2008). Privacy settings may not be simple to maneuver for many psychologists unfamiliar with the technology. For example, within Facebook, adjusting privacy levels may include separate settings for wall posts, photos, applications, and social advertisements that alert friends to personal interactions with online advertising and purchasing (Lee, 2009). It may also be wise to consider using a pseudonym if necessary, to make it difficult for clients to locate practitioners' personal information online (Barnett, 2008; Taylor et al., 2010). Yet, even pseudonyms are not failsafe, as some posts may be traceable to a user's email or IP address.

Practitioners who are uncertain of their technological competence on SNSs should consult with colleagues (Barnett, 2008; Taylor et al., 2010), compile resources (see Table 1 for additional resources), and consult with technologically competent colleagues for safe SNS usage.

Reducing Liability Risk Online

Along with increased capacity to form and maintain social relationships, SNSs unfortunately bring increased risk of liability and harm. For example, intentional or inadvertent disclosure of confidential information on SNSs could pose ethics violations and potentially lead to legal problems under HIPAA, HITECH, and state law (Wheeler, 2011). Thus, to limit the liability risk engendered by SNS usage, practitioners may need to take certain precautions. First, practitioners should contact both their professional and personal liability insurance representatives to be aware of whether professional and personal liability insurance cover SNSs. Along these lines, it would be helpful for APA to provide more nuanced guidelines regarding two aspects of SNS communication: first, what may or may not be considered part of a client's record (Martin, 2010), and second, what online activities are considered acts of a multiple relationship versus incidental contact (Sonne, 1994).

Second, there are certain types of speech that should be avoided by practitioners online, even if using high privacy restrictions and other protections such as pseudonyms. These communications might include breaches of client or supervisee confidentiality, speech that is potentially libelous, and speech that denigrates the reputation of psychology. For example, practitioners should not post client information, disparaging comments about colleagues or client groups, unprofessional media (e.g., photographs and/or videos that undercut the reputation of psychological practice), and comments about litigation in which one is involved (Gabbard et al., 2011).

Conclusion

To ethically traverse the digital landscape of SNSs, psychologists may need to interpret and apply the APA Ethical Code with renewed vigor. This may best happen by incorporating the insight of rural psychological practice concerning the management of increased transparency, as well as by learning the technology and culture of the new online environment. Effective psychologists may need to understand that overlapping relationships may be increasingly inescapable, and therefore should be openly discussed and proactively managed to avoid negative therapeutic outcomes. Likewise, adopting best online practices may be one way to help resolve some of the increasingly more common online dilemmas.

There are signs that the cultural landscape is shifting beneath the feet of many psychologists. The social networking age appears to be upon us. Fortunately, this new online era has an older analogue—rural psychological practice—where practitioners have managed increased degrees of transparency, accidental self-disclosures, and the possibility of boundary violations for decades. Thus, it may benefit psychological practitioners, mentors, and trainees to consider how best to apply ethical wisdom from rural psychological practice to the new small world. How professional psychology chooses to respond will influence its relevance and effectiveness in years to come.

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Zero-Knowledge lets Internet users remain incognito

By Douglas F. Gray

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TWO-YEAR-OLD Zero-Knowledge Systems released its first commercial product, a privacy-management program that allows users to decide what they want others to know about them and when.

The Montreal-based company released version 1.0 of its Freedom package -- software that allows users to surf the Web, send e-mail, chat, and use newsgroups under a pseudonym, or "nym."

These digital identities allow users to configure their own visible information, so instead of appearing as "anonymous," they could appear as "Joe Hill," with the actual identity unknown and not traceable.

Anything a user does under a "nym" goes through up to three servers out of a network of 150 Freedom servers, each one erasing the last trace of where the function came from, according to Austin Hill, president of Zero-Knowledge.

"Each server does not know the source or final destination of the content," Hill said, comparing it to a spy that delivers a secret message to a clandestine location but has no idea where the message ends up.

The Freedom servers are also housed by the participating ISPs, who get paid for the bandwidth they use for the service, as well as a 10 percent share of the revenues from the sales of the pseudonyms.

The service will also be marketed by these ISPs, who will sell the pseudonymous digital identities to users, along with the relevant free software for downloading.

XS4ALL, an ISP in the Netherlands, has one of the Freedom servers. While it does not sell the Freedom software to its users, it offers all 70,000 of its users an extended four-month trial version. "We're not an official reseller, we just want to recommend it to our users," said Sjoera Nas, director of public affairs for XS4ALL.

"I use it myself," she added. "It does make surfing a little bit slower, because it has to pass through the servers."

The pseudonym system lets users build an online reputation without actually giving away their identities, and protects them from having information gathered about their personal lives, Hill said. He pointed to a recent case in California, where an employee was dismissed from his job because of his personal Web site and his postings to a fiction writers' newsgroup.

The ability to have a pseudonym for Internet communications is a significant issue, said Abner Germanow, senior analyst for Internet Security for International Data Corp. (IDC). "The biggest issue in the question of privacy on the Internet is not a question of remaining anonymous, because there are very few people in the world who truly want to remain anonymous," he said.

Privacy and anonymity regarding Internet security have often been confused in the media, Germanow added. "The real issue is how to put the control of an identity in the hands of the person who actually owns the identity," he said. "You can have a false identity, but you could have your real one on there too."

"Background searches on e-mail addresses are becoming second nature in [Silicon] Valley," Hill said.

He cites another possible example, in which an advertising company purchases a credit bureau, which then sells that information to an insurance Web site.

"They are getting access to data that [users] don't even know is being stored somewhere and resold," he said. "It's easy to paint doomsday scenarios."

The liberal encryption laws in Canada make it an ideal place for the company to be based, according to Hill. "Canada is very progressive in encryption. The ultimate decision of the government is that encryption protects far more people than it can ever do harm. The criminals have access to encryption anyway," he said.

Zero-Knowledge Systems Inc., in Montreal, can be reached at www.zeroknowledge.com.

Douglas F. Gray is a London correspondent with the IDG News Service, an InfoWorld affiliate.

Click on the link below. Examine the website and answer the questions for "Source 3."

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