

Communicating in freedom

LibrePlanet Online

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Social Distancing



Freedom at risk



The Free Software Foundation mission

At the FSF, we want all computer users to be able to do everything they need to do on any computer, using only free software, in all circumstances.



Communication tools are especially important

- Communication is supposed to be what we're good at
- Communication is fundamental to freedoms – expression, politics, association, press
- Privacy / surveillance
- Censorship and other manipulations
- Security
- Effective vector for free software adoption



Facebook spies on Messenger conversations

One of the more understated but intriguing statements in Zuckerberg's Vox interview . . . was his public acknowledgment . . . that the company uses computer algorithms to scan all of our private communications on its platform, including Facebook Messenger. . . Zuckerberg acknowledged for the first time that even in private chat sessions, Facebook is not actually a neutral communications platform like the phone company that just provides you a connection and goes away – Facebook's algorithms are there constantly monitoring your most private intimate conversations in an Orwellian telescreen that never turns off.

www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2018/04/04/the-algorithms-take-over-will-facebooks-private-message-scanning-lead-to-autonomous-censorship/



Microsoft bans offensive language on Xbox, Skype

"... these terms allow Microsoft staff to play unrestrained censor if and when they choose," says Corbett. "What's also clear is that they reserve the right to go through your private data, and these terms seem to pretty clearly allow them to watch and listen to your Skype calls, so long as they are 'investigating' something. The terms don't appear to require any complaint to be filed against you – just that an employee deciding that they want to investigate."

<http://fortune.com/2018/03/27/microsoft-bans-offensive-language-xbox-skype-privacy/>



Security issues

Using this vulnerability, [crackers] could alter the text of someone else's reply to a group chat, so editing their words. They could send a private message to another group participation, disguised as a public message, so when the individual responds everyone in the conversation could see it.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/tech/whatsapp-security-problems-edit-messages-a3907481.html>



Free tools we use at the FSF

- Jitsi
- IRC (#fsf, #gnu, #libreplanet)
- Icecast
- Discourse
- Email
- SIP, PSTN via Asterisk
- Mastodon
- GNU social
- Diaspora
- Jabber
- GNU Jami
- Mumble
- NextCloud
- Etherpad



Wishlist for the perfect tool

- Secure – end-to-end encryption, secure against *whom*
- Reproducibly built
- Mobile client
- Web client (careful about proprietary JavaScript)
- Runs on all major OSes
- Can show you puking rainbows
- Voice + text
- Multimedia / “Rich media”
- Transparency of algorithms
- Reliability – no missing / delayed messages
- Support for many simultaneous clients
- No secret server infrastructure
- Stability, including on free machines
- Attractive interface / user experience
- Ability to destroy messages quickly
- Listens to users



How you can help

- Reject nonfree tools
- Encourage others to try free tools to communicate with you
- Fund free tools and organizations supporting them
- Contribute code, documentation, testing
- Use more copyleft



How's the FSF going to help?

- Fiscal sponsorship
- Infrastructure consistent with principles
- Guidance / Advice / Standards
- Recruitment, connections
- Licensing help
- Attention
- Funding, if we can!



Working group on communication freedom

- Identify and publicly document the problems that need to be solved
- Help connect the people who can solve them with the resources they need to do it
- Have free platforms developed, documented, deployed, and advocated to meet the use case needs we're seeing in this pandemic
- Especially virtual events, online education, and workplace communication
- Join as a member now to support work like this at fsf.org/join, and watch for information on how you can help more in the specific areas

