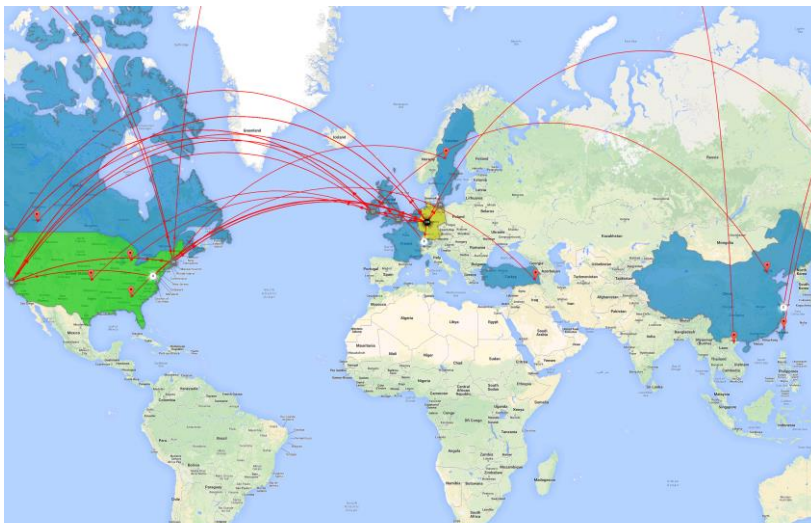


Software Tracks Trackers

KIT Students of Informatics Develop a Software to Search Websites for Trackers



Where do my data go? The "BackTrack" software developed by KIT students illustrates that. (Photo: KIT / ITM-DSN)

Every internet surfer knows the phenomenon: When accessing a news portal, links to offers, videos, images, and advertisements of mail order companies, utilities, or airlines open up simultaneously. They appear to fit exactly to the PC user. Who investigates our interests and preferences in the web? The software developed by students of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) makes these "data trackers" and third-party providers visible and shows to which countries our data are sent.

Whoever accesses a website will not only download the data of this site, but also contents, by means of which third parties can analyze the user, his personal data, and his behavior on the internet. A team of six KIT students of informatics has now studied this topic with particular attention being paid to the private sphere of users on the internet. "Tracking the trackers – who tracks me on the web?" was the question, under which the young computer scientists developed a software to search a certain number of websites for trackers. These websites may be the websites accessed last from the own PC or the 100 most frequently visited websites in Germany. The

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software identifies, collects, and analyzes third-party providers and trackers, i.e. services spying on the data traffic of the user and evaluating it for specific advertisements. “The objective was to obtain an idea of how users are monitored when they are surfing in the web,” Dr. Sebastian Labitzke says. He was one of the scientific supervisors of the work performed by the highly motivated and creative team of KIT students.

The software developed by the young computer scientists clearly illustrates to which dealers and providers at which places in the world the data are transmitted. According to the map, data flow from the initially accessed website all around the globe, to the Netherlands as well as to the USA or Taiwan. For the users, this knowledge may be important due to the different legislations in these countries. “Our work visualizes the rather abstract web structures,” Professor Hannes Hartenstein says. The student project was organized at his Chair for Decentralized Systems and Network Services of the Institute of Telematics (ITM). According to the scientist, the teaching module “Practice of software development” established at KIT’s Department of Informatics provides students with the opportunity to gain experience for the future profession in a very early study phase. The prototype developed by the young people can now be further extended in functionality and may then serve as a highly valuable and legal tool for data protection.

Digital Press Kit Relating to the Science Year 2014

Communication, energy supply, mobility, industry, health care, leisure time: Digital technologies have long been part of our everyday life, they open up new opportunities and offer solutions for problems of society. At the same time, they pose challenges. Opportunities and risks will be in the focus of the Science Year 2014 – The Digital Society. At the KIT, researchers of all disciplines study various – technical and societal – aspects of digitization. The digital press kit of KIT relating to the Science Year 2014 contains short portraits, press releases, and videos:

<http://www.pkm.kit.edu/digitalegesellschaft>

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation according to the legislation of the state of Baden-Württemberg. It fulfills the mission of a university and the mission of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. Research activities focus on energy, the natural and built environment as well as on society and technology and cover the whole range extending from fundamental aspects to application. With about

9000 employees, including nearly 6000 staff members in the science and education sector, and 24000 students, KIT is one of the biggest research and education institutions in Europe. Work of KIT is based on the knowledge triangle of research, teaching, and innovation.

This press release is available on the internet at www.kit.edu.

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