



THE THREADS OF THE WEB -- 1974-1989

When PRIVACY JOURNAL began publishing in 1974, the personal-information network looked like this.

For an idea of what it looks like now, as the newsletter approaches its fifteenth anniversary, see the next two pages.

If you wish to reprint these charts in other publications, call 401/274-7861 for permission in advance. There is a reprint fee, based on circulation.

EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDES ABOUT MONITORING

By Simson Garfinkel

An overwhelming majority of respondents in a Boston survey say they are being electronically monitored in the workplace.

In the survey, the Massachusetts Coalition on New Office Technology (CNOT) asked 686 office workers detailed questions about the kinds of electronic monitoring they were subjected to and how they had learned about the monitoring, and explored the impact of the collected data. Respondents came from 49 different companies, more than half from the telecommunications industry. The survey found that:

- Eighty-five percent of the respondents reported that they were subject to computer monitoring, a process in which statistics such as the average number of keystrokes per minute and number of minutes spent away from a workstation are tabulated and reported to supervisors on a per-employee basis.

- Eighty-one percent reported that supervisors listened in on telephone conversations between employees and customers. Many electronic telephone

(Continued on page six)

Back to the Drawing Room -- The town council of posh Palm Beach, Fla., has vetoed a plan to mount cameras on the few bridges entering town to videotape all who enter.

**ROBERT ELLIS SMITH**  
*Publisher*



202/547-2865

**PRIVACY JOURNAL**

An Independent Monthly on Privacy in a Computer Age

PRIVACY JOURNAL is published monthly, reporting on legislation, legal trends, new technology, and public attitudes affecting the confidentiality of information and the individual's right to privacy. Founded in 1974. ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER: Lee Shoreham. CIRCULATION MANAGER: Eric Siegel. **SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$98 per year (\$109 per year overseas). Special discount rates are available for students and others.** Telephone and mail orders accepted.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS: PRIVACY JOURNAL also publishes *Compilation of State and Federal Privacy Laws*, a 100-page book updated annually, which costs \$26. Also, *Celebrities and Privacy*, a special report on misappropriation and the right to publicity, \$14.95. *Workrights*, a 267-page paperback on individual rights in the workplace, \$9.95. *The Big Brother Book of Lists*, a 246-page collection of trivia and humor about surveillance, \$9.95.

PRIVACY JOURNAL is a copyright publication, not to be reproduced without permission. Photocopying is specifically prohibited. Other publications are welcome to reprint brief excerpts from the newsletter with appropriate credit to PRIVACY JOURNAL. Offices at Suite 926, 1511 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, and P.O. Box 28577, Providence, R.I. 02908. MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 15300, Washington, D.C. 20003. TELEPHONE: 202/547-2865 or 401/274-7861.

MONITORING (Continued from page three)

systems allow such electronic eavesdropping to take place without the knowledge or consent of the monitored employee.

■Forty-five percent reported that supervisors could monitor office conversations among coworkers through the microphones on their headsets.

■Forty-seven percent of the employees were told of the surveillance by supervisors. The rest learned of the monitoring from coworkers, unions, or other sources, or after the data had been used for disciplining them.

"It is absolutely clear that very few people outside of those industries where electronic surveillance is used know of or understand how or when it is being used," says Massachusetts State Rep. Sherwood Guernsey, who has filed legislation based on the survey to curb abuses of monitoring (HB 4196 and HB 2577).

A similar bill to regulate computer monitoring has been put on the shelf for this year by the state legislature in Minnesota. In Rhode Island, Rep. Frank Fiorenzani plans to delete substantive provisions in his bill (H6018) and limit it to a "right to know" bill. This would give employees a right to know about surveillance, but there would be no requirements of an automatic signal when monitoring is conducted and no prohibition against using data for evaluations. IBM, AT&T, United Airlines, and New England Telephone vigorously opposed tougher legislation.

The survey in Massachusetts found that many employees did not know the extent of electronic monitoring in their companies or what was done with the information. Almost two-thirds of the respondents had not been informed that they would be electronically monitored before they were hired; one-third of the employees had not learned of the fact three weeks or longer after being hired.

"It is surprising the extent to which even monitored workers in the phone company are not fully informed as to what information is being collected and how it is being employees whoused," says Lisa Gallatin, CNOT's executive director, who noted that phone company employees were among the best informed of any employees who had been surveyed. Employers often claim that electronic monitoring gives them a better tool for evaluating employee performance and that it gives workers feedback on their day-to-day performance. Nevertheless, two-thirds of those surveyed disagreed with the statement that "electronic monitoring helps me work more productively"; 65 percent agreed with the statement that "I can't do a quality job because I have to work too fast." Almost two-thirds agreed with the statement that "monitoring makes it hard to get up for a break, even to go to the bathroom."

People hate monitoring the most when they think that it is being used unfairly to spy on them, Gallatin says. "Fifty-eight respondents reported that they know supervisors listen in on personal conversations." The companies where, according to respondents, supervisors eavesdrop on personal calls include AT&T, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Boston Financial Data Services, Boston Edison, Conrail, Delta Airlines, Eastern Airlines, John Hancock Distributors, New England Telephone, NYNEX, Social Security Administration, and the state government's Merit Rating Board.

"One of the most alarming findings of this study had to do with the symptoms of repetitive motion syndrome," Gallatin reported. Workers who were "often monitored" reported 10 to 20 times more eyestrain, headache, and back or neck aches than workers who were never monitored. The report is available for \$15 from CNOT, 241 St. Botolph St., Boston, Mass. 02115, 617/536-TECH.