Bridging the Disconnect Between Web Privacy and User Perception

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Enabling Privacy by Design

Users lack ability to understand tracking:

- 'Activity linkability' is invisible
  - Activity is linkable in surprising ways
  - Not just identifiers

- Omniscient entities are enabled by linkability
  - Ad networks, CDNs, Facebook

- Linkability culprits:
  - Flawed identifier transmission model
  - Poor visual cues about user identity
  - Fingerprinting
Improving the Origin Model

- “Double-key” all new and existing identifiers
  - Use top level domain + 3\(^{rd}\) party domain
  - This includes the cache, too (See: SafeCache)
  - Fits users' mental model of website relationships

- Can use to satisfy RFC 2965 sec 3.3.6 (finally!)

- OpenID and OAuth logins still possible
  - Allows concept of “Logging into CNN via Facebook”

- May need whitelist request for (some) cookies
  - Xauth is primary example of a protocol w/ issues
    - Alternatives available (Eg: User-launched Popups)
New model allows simpler UI for the same site data:
Representing Identity

Users should be given cues about who the web thinks they are

- **Browser-level pseudonym, avatar icon, or Firefox Persona**
- **Password protected browser state storage**
  - Users should be able to log in and out of identities
  - Mozilla Weave
- **Private Browsing Mode is a special case with no storage and low linkability to saved identities**
  - Should have user-selectable persona/cue, too
Fingerprinting

- Ad networks are already moving beyond cookies
  - Banks too

- Unique browser attributes identify users
  - Installed plugins, fonts, user agent, resolution, time..

- Can be measured by Panopticlick Entropy Metric

- Solutions can be origin-based or identity-based
  - Origin solutions/restrictions may be more effective

- New web features need evaluation
  - This can get tricky..
  - May need to rely on simulations or intuition
Summary

1. Improve identifier origin model
   - Greatly simplifies privacy UI
   - All site data managed together (including history)

2. Provide (better) identity cues to users

3. Address Fingerprinting Linkability
   - Fingerprinting Linkability between origins
   - Fingerprinting Linkability between identities