User Perceptions of Do Not Track

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Online User Study of Expectations for Do Not Track

- Mechanical Turk online study currently running
  - Multiple preliminary pilot studies
  - Incomplete results, $n = 214$
  - Showing quick highlights

- User expectations $\neq$ what users want
What do you think this button would do if you clicked on it?

• Results:
  - 32% mentioned history
  - 27% mentioned cookies
  - 12% thought it would be dangerous
  - 5% mentioned IP addresses
  - 3% mentioned advertising or data mining

• Communication challenges but starting in the right ballpark, provided we agree DNT > OBA

“Not to track a package coming through the post.”
Data Collection Before & After

- Data Collection Before DNT
- Data Collection After DNT

Bar chart showing the percentage of data collection before and after DNT for different categories:
- Nothing at all
- Ads clicked
- IP address
- Pages, current site
- Search terms
1st: 37%
3rd: 45%
Neither: 19%

1st: 88%
3rd: 11%
Neither: 2%

1st: 37%
3rd: 49%
Neither: 13%

1st: 10%
3rd: 68%
Neither: 20%

Yahoo!
Fifteen Seconds of Other Findings

• Also expectations for data use

• Click & nothing changes:
  - 51% unsurprised
  - 45% blame browser company

• First time hearing about Do Not Track: 81%

• Write-in comments show support, skepticism, and concern around the details
Observations

• Users do hear “Do Not Track” as related to being tracked online...

• ...and many think it means they will not be tracked at all, including collection

• Options to address the expectations gap:
  - Build DNT to match expectations
  - Create one definition of DNT and communicate it very clearly
  - Create one definition and communicate exceptions
  - Allow multiple definitions and communicate them in novel ways
    Suggestion: HTTP header response
  - Put details into privacy policies and help files
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