

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Smartphone tracking device stalks users through locating services

Kylie McCalmont | Staff Writer

Siri is just like a best friend. She knows who you text, your favorite apps and songs and most importantly: every location you've visited in the past two months.

Though the iPhone is increasing in popularity, many people, such as junior Umaize Savani, have been oblivious to the tracking device implanted in the cellphone resting in the pocket of their jeans.

"One day in anatomy, I pulled down my notification center and it said 15 minutes to get home if you leave now," Savani said. "I freaked out and I asked my friends about it and about 3 out of 10 had it. I thought it was pretty sweet after that and now (the locator service) just stays there."

According to computer programming teacher and computer scientist Gregg Kummer, there's only a few requirements an iPhone needs to have the ability to know the phone's location and ultimately the location of the owner.

"Normally it uses an I.D. number that your iPhone has, the explicit I.D. number and your GPS locating service," Kummer said. "If you've got your locating service on and you have it open to access from other apps, then they can track you."

By using apps like "Find My iPhone", junior Evie Davis said the tracker is a benefit of the iPhone especially if the phone gets lost.

"I think it's a good thing; not so much to know where I am but to know where my phone is if I ever lose it," Davis said. "Once my dad lost his phone and we had tracked it to someone at work who had picked it up for him and we saw where that guy was."

While Savani and Davis don't mind the fact that their iPhone can track their every move, junior Sam Parsons said even if it's his parents that are tracking him, it's an invasion of his privacy.

"I don't like it from the teenager perspective of my parents tracking me and knowing where I am at all times," Parsons said. "It's not really that I have something to hide but that it's kind of an invasion of my privacy and it bugs me that they know where I am at all times."

According to Kummer, the iPhone tracker can create problems bigger than a dispute about privacy between high school students and their parents, especially with a professional hacker behind the keyboard.

"Data is a good thing but being a computer scientist, I'm a conspiracy theorist and I believe it's being used more for the bad than it is for the good," Kummer said. "A couple years ago we did a showcase for the Tech Olympics and one of my students created a thing called the Stalker. What it was is you typed in five of your friends' I.D. numbers on their phones and then he created some schematics of the school building and it showed where the friends were on the school campus. I thought the Stalker might not have been a very good term so we called it Friend Find. If he can do it at 17, imagine what professionals can do with your locating services."

Although leaving the location finder on can make one's life easier, like in Davis' case, there is also a risk every smartphone user takes when they choose to not swipe 'off', and according to Kummer, there is a dangerous lack of people who know these risks.

"Almost everyone has got a smartphone now, so I tell my kids everyone is going to use a computer or use a smartphone," Kummer said. "But only around less than 10 percent know how to program it and less than 50 percent really know what's doing against and for them."

According to Kummer, as the majority of smartphone owners know little about the capabilities good and bad about the tracker, Big Brother becomes less of a threat as big business aggressively increases.

"I firmly believe that big business is worse than Big Brother, so everyone is worried about Big Brother watching us, well at least they have to follow some constitutional law," Kummer said. "Big Business is based on greed and they will use any and every bit of your data to try to vacate you from your money so I don't think it is a good idea at all. A hundred percent of us will be users; the elite 10 percent will be that one's that can control it."



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 Settings>
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