



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on March 30, 2012

Google's New "Account Activity" Service Raises Privacy Concerns

According to Tuerk, signing up for the service will provide Account Activity subscribers with a monthly report that delivers a [variety of benefits](#), including "transparency and control; summarized data associated with each product you use when signed in to your account; and links to change your personal settings."

The service supplies users with information such as their website history, what sites they frequent, the number of e-mails they've sent and received in the past month, and other tidbits relating to accounts that are associated with their e-mail address. Further, as more reports are pulled, activity summaries will show changes in use over time.



The company's Public Policy blog provides an [example](#) of how the program works:

For example, my most recent Account Activity report told me that I sent 5 percent more email than the previous month and received 3 percent more. An Italian hotel was my top Gmail contact for the month. I conducted 12 percent more Google searches than in the previous month, and my top queries reflected the vacation I was planning: [rome] and [hotel].

The blog post goes on to say that the feature will arm users with powerful tools to protect their accounts, as they can review their account history to identify "sign-ins from countries where you haven't been or devices you've never owned." Moreover, users can change their password immediately and, if need be, sign up for a more beefed-up level of security. "We wanted to make it easier for signed-in users to understand, manage and protect their information on Google," [said](#) one Google spokesperson.

"The account activity tracker is part of Google's larger effort to create a single place where its users can see what's happening with their Google accounts," added web analyst Greg Sterling.

Google released its new feature just days after the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) [issued a report](#) urging that web users be provided with more control over the information extracted from them while browsing the web. The FTC suggested that more transparent data collection and a Do Not Track option would grant users more functioning to inhibit companies from snooping on their web movements.

Many critics, however, do not perceive the new service as a benefit, because the availability of the monthly reports indicates that Google is tracking personal information about users' web activity. While the Internet tech giant believes the service will improve the overall user experience, U.S. consumer watchdogs and even European privacy agencies are protesting the new policy, as it gives the company unbounded access to users' personal information.



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The Blaze conducted an online [poll](#) to see what their readers thought about Google's Account Activity feature, revealing that the overwhelming majority found Google's new add-on "creepy." "Do you think Google's Account Activity report is comforting or creepy?" the survey posited. Here were the results:

- 9 percent responded with the following answer: "Comforting. This will give us more knowledge and control about our movements on the web."
- 50 percent said "Creepy. I'm nervous to see what data is being collected on a monthly basis but I'm still signing up for this service."
- 41 percent said, "I don't even want to know how much Google knows about me."

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