



Information and Privacy
Commissioner/Ontario

Commissaire à l'information
et à la protection de la vie privée/Ontario

News Release

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Tie for top award – two winners exemplify innovative privacy research in two diverse areas

TORONTO - The 2011 **Award for Outstanding Research in Privacy Enhancing Technologies** (PET Award), was presented in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada on Wednesday.

Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, and Microsoft are the two co-sponsors of the award, which was created in 2003 to encourage the development of technology to help protect privacy, rather than to threaten it. A global panel of leading technology researchers selects the winners.

The first winner was R. Wang, Y. Li, X. Wang, H. Tang and X. Zhou, who wrote about the protection of genetic information - a topic that is on the frontier of privacy research today.

http://www.informatics.indiana.edu/xw7/papers/gwas_paper.pdf

The authors showed that someone possessing an individual's genetic information could potentially determine (with high probability) that the individual was part of a Genome-based disease study based on statistical information commonly released during those studies. This demonstrates that there is a basic conflict between the requirements of genomic research and privacy.

The second winner, A. Korolova, wrote about a new class of attacks that exploit advertising systems offering microtargeting capabilities in order to breach user privacy.

http://theory.stanford.edu/~korolova/Privacy_violations_using_microtargeted_ads.pdf

This paper has already had a huge practical impact. Just a week after the author notified Facebook about the attacks, Facebook made changes to its advertising system. However, the new Facebook system remains vulnerable to this class of attacks, reinforcing that this area of research continues to be vital.

Commissioner Cavoukian, renowned for her creation of "*Privacy by Design*" – the requirement to proactively embed privacy directly into technologies, as the default condition says, "With emerging technologies growing rapidly in every area of our lives, leading edge research into privacy is necessary to protect everyone's personal information. I applaud the winners on their remarkable achievement and innovation."

For more information about the Privacy Technology Awards, visit <http://petsymposium.org/award/>.



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