**Sites Feed Personal Details To New Tracking Industry**

from [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703977004575393173432219064.html#articleTabs%3Darticle](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703977004575393173432219064.html)

\_\_ (new reading level)

Adapted from an article by  JULIA ANGWIN and TOM MCGINTY

July 30, 2010

Some big U.S. websites now install things on your computer when you visit their sites. They track (record) what people do on their sites. Some are upset about this tracking. Just one visit to a site might mean you have more than 100 tracking tools on your computer. Reporters at the *Wall Street Journal* found this out.

They looked at the 50 most popular U.S. websites. They counted how many trackers were installed by each site. They discovered what each tracker was doing.

Then the reporters added up the total number of trackers that the 50 sites installed on people’s computers. The total was 3,180! Only one site, Wikipedia.org, installed no files at all. Do you use Dictionary.com, Comcast.net or MSN.com? They installed more than 100 tracking tools each during the Journal's test.

 About 2/3 of the tracking tools came from companies that create and sell consumer profiles. Google Inc., Microsoft. and Quantcast Corp. placed most of the trackers. These companies aim ads at people online.

Reporters discovered that trackers are more and more invasive. Some trackers can record a person's keystrokes online and then send the text to a data-gathering company. The company analyzes this data. They look for clues. They look for what you read online and who you connect with online. Other tracking files can “come back” even when you delete them.

The ad industry says tracking doesn't violate anyone's privacy. That’s because it doesn't identify people by names. They also point out that the tracking activity is disclosed in privacy policies. Companies say they provide a useful service. They make it more likely that Internet users see ads and information relevant to them personally….

Congress is thinking about making laws to limit tracking. The Federal Trade Commission is making privacy guidelines for the industry.