

Keeping Watch

now goes both ways

"SOUSVEILLANCE"

Citizens wearing cameras as defense discussed at meeting

BY PAUL ANDREWS
Special to The Times

Concerned about Big Brother watching you?

Why not watch back? With cameras getting smaller and cheaper all the time, and showing up on everything from cellphones to lapel pins, round-the-clock surveillance is becoming available to average citizens.

As much as some may recoil

at the thought of a two-way conversation, he said, yesterday's meeting in his own home on record covered the best defense against privacy government and corporate intrusions into privacy.

First, attendees at the Association for the Study of Electronic Privacy, Security and Computers and Privacy Conference in Vancouver, B.C., discussed the use of portable cameras as a defense against surveillance.

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"SOUSVEILLANCE" DISCUSSED AT MEETING

Term refers to wearing portable camera

ence panelists said, police-brutality victims or protesters at a rally would be able to record illegal actions taken against them by police.

With a wireless camera and connection, the images could be transmitted in real time over the Internet, a protection in case police moved to seize or destroy the equipment, said Mark Brin, a professor of Toronto's York University.

Brin, a pioneer in the use of portable cameras, introduced the concept of "sousveillance" at the meeting.

Both examples of "sousveillance" were real-life events: In 2004, Rodney King incident, a police officer was beaten by a protester on amateur video.

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DAVID BRIN
Author of "The Transparent Society"

crease in the professionalism and effectiveness" of law enforcement, said David Brin, author of "The Transparent Society."

"The thing about the Big Brother telescreen was not so much that he could see you, but that you could not see back," Brin said.

As one strategy, government monitoring could be subverted by sticking tiny, cheap cameras on lampposts and other public structures, Brin suggested.

"I'm not a radical against secrecy," said Brin, who also writes science-fiction novels. But authorities will always use secrecy as a shield against accountability, he added.

Sousveillance poses its own set

of thorny issues. An attendee from Quebec said provincial law there prohibits photographing someone without his or her knowledge.

And sousveillance practitioners using a restroom might want to point their cameras toward the wall, Latanya Sweetney, a Carnegie Mellon associate professor, suggested somewhat piously.

In cases where both parties are recording, neither might feel comfortable engaging even in informal conversation, some panelists noted.

As an example, Simon Davies, director of Privacy International, recalled asking a presidential candidate if he ever could speak candidly about anything. The candidate acknowledged that he felt under "constant surveillance."

"For him, the idea of private conversation was gone," Davies said.

Some foresee a possible balance between sousveillance and surveillance called "equilibrium," where different constituencies work together toward security as well as accountability.

Davies suggested that citizens working with law enforcement would preserve freedom better than opposing surveillance.

"A technological canopy should be a last resort," Davies said.

Sousveillance does not have to carry a political agenda, confer-

ees noted. Microsoft's OpenSource called Comix, the first of its kind, Recording of Big Brother essay described a 1945 essay called "The constant surveillance" by the near Bush administration, which transcribing a "Panopticon" by Jeremy Bentham, which never in Seattle, in a central tower "after a fashion" they're being them, where monitors in the theme, one know for sure, some of watching.

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Paul Andri
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