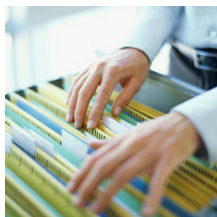


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By: George Craciun, Security News Editor



Viacom granted access to Google database
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

[YouTube Viewing Habits No Longer Private](#)

Google has to disclose this information by court order

Entertainment industry giant Viacom initiated a lawsuit against YouTube in March 2007, asking for damages in excess of \$1 billion. Louis Lee Stanton, a Southern District of New York judge, has recently ordered YouTube to hand over to Viacom all information regarding uploaded files, viewing habits, user names and IP addresses. Are we to expect class action lawsuits against YouTube viewers? Because that is probably what Viacom will do with the information. Extract from Viacom's complaint: "YouTube has harnessed technology to willfully infringe copyrights on a huge scale, depriving writers, composers and performers of the rewards they are owed for effort and innovation, reducing the incentives of America's creative industries, and profiting from the illegal conduct of others as well." YouTube claimed that there may be drastic and severe consequences in handing over such sensible data, but the judge dismissed this affirmation as "speculative". I guess it doesn't matter to him that Viacom has your username, IP address, viewing habits and a list of all the material you uploaded to YouTube, which chances are it is copyrighted. The judge even dismissed YouTube's claims that there is too much data to simply hand over as unfounded. Judge Louis Lee Stanton's own words: "While the logging database is large, all of its contents can be copied onto a few off-the-shelf four-terabyte hard drives." It goes without saying that private liberties groups responded swiftly. The EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation) for example has gone public and stated that the court's decision is an offense to privacy rights and that sensible, confidential data will be exposed. The EFF: "We urge Viacom to back off this overbroad request and Google to take all steps necessary to challenge this order and protect the rights of its users." The only time the judge said no to Viacom was when he refused the company's request that Google disclose its source code. Viacom considered that by gaining access to the source code it could find a way to modify it so that copyrighted material would be automatically rejected. At this point judge Stanton is pretty much just as popular as Lars Ulrich from Metallica when he decided to take on Napster. Not to mention that his intellectual faculties have come up in several publications and blogs.