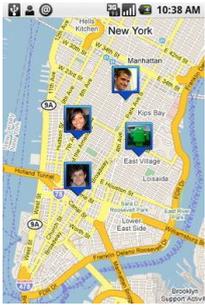


BIG BROTHER GOOGLE



Google has recently launched a new service, Google Latitude, that informs users about the location of their friends through a cell phone. The new service has already sparked numerous privacy concerns.

Google provides us with a new searching service. From now on we may be able to locate “anybody” through their mobile phones. It is now possible to see your friends, family members or simply those who agree to inform you about their location on Google maps. Google Latitude is available in 27 countries including the USA or the Czech Republic. The service works on BlackBerry, Symbian S60, and Windows Mobile smart phones. Soon it will also work on Google's Android phone and on Apple's iPhone.

It may certainly be helpful technology. Parents will always know the exact location of their kids and grandparents will never get lost again. You will be able to easily find out whether your family safely arrived to a holiday resort and then check if there are any friends in a nearby bar.

There are, however, also some privacy concerns. Some people see it as yet another intrusion. There are video cameras all around in some cities and this service may be perceived as another spy tool. Will Google become another big brother? Some people even fear the data may be sold to marketing companies.

Google argues it will not store the information about their customers' location. The service needs to be manually turned on and it gives the user a possibility to choose who will see the information and who will not. It is also possible to “hide” one's location or to set it manually.

Google is not the only one who offers this kind of service. Other companies that offer similar technology are for example Loopt and Where.com, which have more than million customers.

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