

Three Reasons Why I Won't Be Using Google Latitude

Targeted advertising -- not to mention an intangible creepy feeling -- will keep me under the radar.

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Google [unveiled](#) its new mobile location tracking service, [Google Latitude](#), on Wednesday -- and it took me only a matter of minutes to determine it's one service I won't be using.

Google Latitude, if you haven't heard, lets you have your location monitored and shared in real time with your friends, family, or whomever you choose. Once you sign up, GPS satellites and cell towers watch your whereabouts. They pull location data from your laptop or smartphone, then pinpoint you on a pretty little Google Map as you go about your day.

While Google Latitude [isn't the first mobile location tracking service](#) to hit the market, it may be the first with the potential for mainstream and widespread adoption. Here are three reasons why I won't be hopping on the bandwagon.

1. It's just a little too friendly.

Call me old-fashioned, but I don't want every aspect of my life to be public domain -- even when it comes to my close friends and family. I may be in the minority within the open book, share-it-all sentiment of the Web 2.0 world, but there's something nice about not having everyone knowing what I'm doing every minute of my day. If I run out for a quick cup of coffee, I may not want my buddy to see that I'm right around the corner from his house. If I tell someone I can't make it to dinner because I'm visiting a friend in the hospital, I don't want him to know that I'm really sitting at home eating biscuits.

The same goes for significant others -- do you want your honey having a honing device on you 24/7? (Not that you'd be doing anything you don't want her to know about, of course.)

Now, Google Latitude does let you limit how specific of a location any given person can see. Let's face it, though: If you make the effort to get into a location-sharing relationship with someone, odds are you're both going to reveal more than just your current city. And if you suddenly disappear from the map or switch over to showing limited info, it's going to look a little strange.

Latitude also gives you the option of "faking" your location by manually setting it for anywhere you want. The last thing I need, though, is one more pain in the pants thing like that on my plate. Do I really want to be thinking nonstop about whether I should "mask" my location and create a high-tech white lie for any given movement of my day? Why not just avoid the hassle and not open that door to begin with?

2. Google already has enough dirt on me.

We've heard for years about how much [Google knows about us](#). From cookies to calendars and crazy search

queries, the G-gods probably know more about me than my own mother does. The last thing I need is Google also knowing where I am every second.

To be fair, Google is taking a lot of privacy precautions with Latitude. [Reps promise](#) only your most recent location is stored on Google's servers. Still, you know the data is there, and there's no telling how it could be used in the future. Whether it's the idea of targeted advertising or just the intangible creepy feeling I get knowing that someone could be watching me, I'll politely walk away from the opportunity.

3. Who knows who could end up getting the data?

Right now, the location data from Latitude stops at Google's servers. But who's to say what agency might demand it at some point down the line?

Think back to Google's [battle with the government](#) a few years ago. Officials wanted Google to turn over the text of all terms typed into its search site for a specific time period as part of a child pornography investigation. Google [fought the order](#), but other search engines -- specifically, those run by AOL, MSN, and Yahoo -- [didn't resist quite so much](#).

Then there was the time AOL [accidentally posted](#) three months' worth of search histories. People were able to actually identify specific users and see their searches, even contact them based on the information.

We don't anticipate any of that happening with the Latitude location data right now. But no one anticipated those instances happening back then, either. I'd rather not take the chance when it comes to something as sensitive as my every step. You just don't know who might get their hands on the data in the future, whether by subpoena or by accident.

So there you have it -- the three reasons I won't be using Google Latitude. Maybe I'm overly protective of my privacy, but in an era when the verses to "Every Breath You Take" can serve as a literal description of a day, you've gotta hang on to what little you can.

Well, time to get back to work. If you need me, I'll be right here at my desk. That's my story, anyway -- and, thanks to the lack of location tracking technology in my life, I'm sticking to it.

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