

Google reveals plans to put 'eyes in machines' as digital surveillance fears reach boiling point

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EYE SPY? Google reveals plans to put 'eyes in machines' as digital surveillance fears reach boiling point

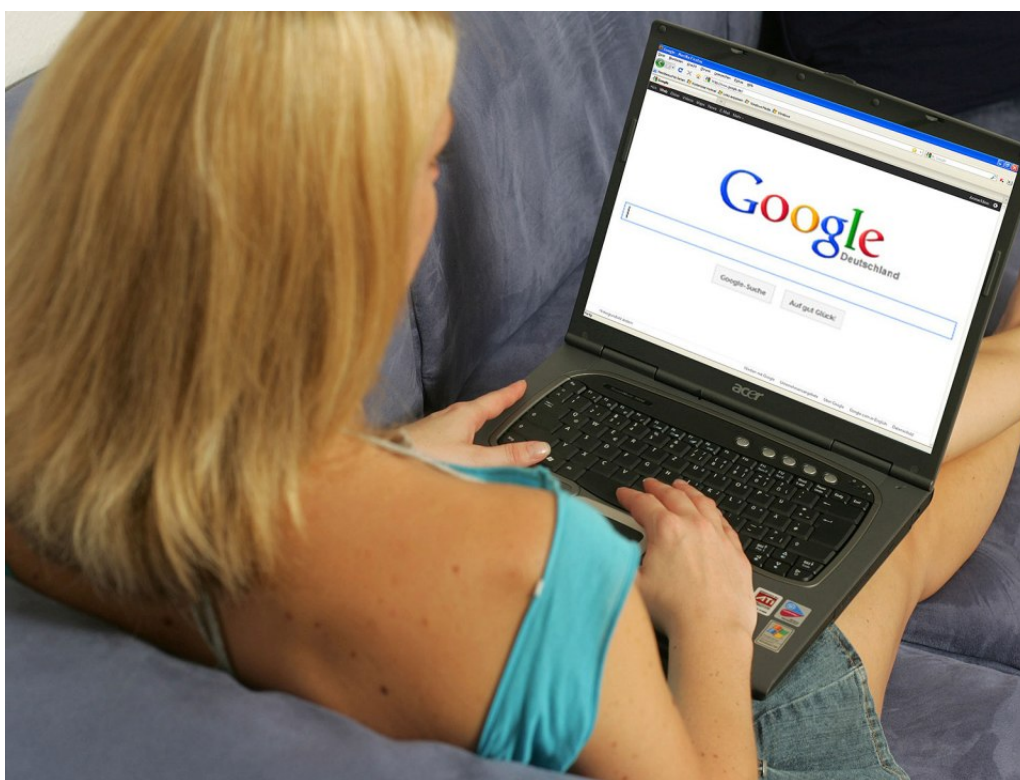
Campaigners slam tech giant's scheme as 'creepy' and urge Brits to cover up cameras on smartphones and computers

by Jasper Hamill

Google is planning to put "eyes in machines" and boost computers' ability to automatically recognise people, places or object

The tech giant has just revealed plans to purchase a French firm called Moodstocks which builds software capable of working out what's happening in a photo – a trick called image recognition.

This buyout is likely to conclude within weeks, although it's not known exactly how much Google paid to buy the company.



²
We know what you did last summer (because you searched for it on Google)

"Ever since we started Moodstocks, our dream has been to give eyes to machines by turning cameras into smart sensors able to make sense of their surroundings," [the French firm wrote](#).

Google said it would use this system to help identify pictures so they can be easily found through a search engine.

But the development is likely to stoke privacy fears, as many people are concerned that allowing computers to "see" like humans will one day enable the construction of a surveillance state in which our every move can be monitored by governments, cops or corporations. The news comes just weeks after it was [revealed that Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, tapes over his MacBook camera and microphone](#).

These fears are now bubbling over into the real world. Earlier this week, a man allegedly threw Molotov cocktails at Google Street View cars parked outside its California headquarters.

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In an affidavit, police officers said the man later told them "he felt Google was watching him and that made him upset".

Renate Samson, president of the campaign group Big Brother Watch, said people should be aware of the surveillance potential of their computers.

"All connected devices now have a camera and microphone in them, often these can be turned off and on without us knowing," she told The Sun.

"Making these eyes intelligent will be great for identifying random objects and helping our smart devices to become even smarter, but not so good for keeping your personal life personal.



[2](#)

CCTV cameras may soon be able to recognise people using facial recognition technology

"Many people will find the ability for a machine to see everything we see creepy. Covering the camera on your phone, computer or connected device with some dark tape may be one of the few things we can do to keep ourselves safe from prying eyes in the future."

Google said its purchase of Moodstocks would make its services "simpler and more useful".

Vincent Simonet, head of Google's French research and development centre, wrote: "We have made great strides in terms of visual recognition: now you can search in Google Pictures such as 'party' or 'beach' and the application will offer you good pictures without you n' have never needed to categorize them manually.

"But there is still much to do in this area. And it is here that Moodstocks intervenes."