

O’Hara, K. and Shadbolt, N. *The Spy in the Coffee Machine: The End of Privacy As We Know It*. Oneworld Publications, 2008. Pp. 294. \$16.95 (paper). ISBN 978-1851685545

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The Spy in the Coffee Machine is a timely and balanced book, while at the same time a scary discourse about the way technology is eroding privacy. It is very up-to-date, looking at how modern technologies and those that employ them have eaten into our daily lives and consequently our freedoms. In our quest to move with technologies at a fast pace, we all seem to easily ignore the greater ramification. This book brings them to our attention.

There is no doubt that, in this book, Shadbolt and O’Hara have initiated a debate about what we mean by privacy. They clearly explain that privacy can have countless meanings to different people at different times and it has always been that way. As a concept, privacy is seen always in transition, always being redefined by new information.² O’Hara and Shadbolt point out that “a number of technologies have affected the value, function and feasibility of privacy directly.” One example is the development of sophisticated technologies for transmitting and intercepting messages. Another is the development of technologies for storing and manipulating information. No matter how we see and interpret privacy, it has without a doubt been transformed by the computer revolution as we increasingly turn to technology for both work and leisure. By making purchases online, posting blogs, social networking and surfing the net, our electronic activity can easily be used to track our movements. Many of us willingly broadcast our lives through social networking spaces and blogs, and O’Hara and Shadbolt argue that “when one’s self as a social

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² MacDonald, D. A. (n.d). ‘Myths in the Privacy Debate’. Available: <http://cei.org/pdf/2381.pdf>.