

VFI Executive Briefing

A weekly roundup of technology news

April 18-22, 2016

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HILL UPDATE

The Hill [Silicon Valley unites against encryption bill](#)

Major tech firms are banding together to oppose an encryption bill that would require them to help government investigators decrypt customer data. A coalition that includes Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Twitter blasted the legislation as “unworkable” in a letter sent Tuesday to the bill’s backers, Sens. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

ARTICLE SUMMARY

PBS Newshour [Microsoft sues DOJ over demands for access to customer data](#)

In the wake of the FBI’s showdown with Apple last month, a new tech giant is taking up arms against government oversight. Microsoft sued the Department of Justice Thursday, arguing that it is unconstitutional for the government to request access to a customer’s data while banning Microsoft from informing the individual in question. Microsoft president Brad Smith joins Judy Woodruff for more.

The Hill [Poll: Voters trust tech companies ahead of FBI on data security](#)

A majority of voters trust major technology companies to protect customers’ personal information more than the federal government, according to a poll commissioned by The App Association. The results released Monday found that when given the choice, 54 percent of voters said they trust companies like Apple, Google and Facebook to do a better job securing their personal information. Another 21 percent chose federal agencies like the FBI ahead of tech companies. A large portion did not choose either.

New York Times [Challenge to Google Books Is Declined by Supreme Court](#)

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to revive a challenge to Google’s digital library of millions of books, turning down an appeal from authors who said the project amounted to copyright infringement on a mass scale. The Supreme Court’s brief order left in place an appeals court decision that the project was a “fair use” of the authors’ work, ending a legal saga that had lasted more than a decade.

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Wired [Root Is a Little Robot on a Mission to Teach Kids to Code](#)

ASK ZIVTHAN DUBROVSKY what it takes to turn kids into lifelong coders and he'll mention a spark. Dubrovsky leads a bio-inspired robotics team at Harvard's Wyss Institute, and knows a lot about spark. As he explains it, it's an event that happens early in a person's experience with programming or computers—a formative experience that inspires a desire to learn that comes from within. He's pretty sure he's figured out a way of creating that spark, too: Root, an educational robot designed to teach kids—and adults—how to code.

Computerworld [Microsoft cites new EU personal data rules in support of email dispute](#)

Microsoft has cited new European data protection rules in support of its claim that the U.S. government should use inter-governmental agreements rather than a warrant to force the technology company to provide emails stored in Ireland that are required for an investigation. m.2 SSD shootout: PCI Express blows away SATA and M.2 in throughput testing For the better part of a decade now, the traditional interface for hard drives has been Serial ATA READ NOW The General Data Protection Regulation was adopted last week by the European Parliament with an aim to provide an unified data protection regime across member states.

New York Times [F.B.I. Tells Panel It Needs Hackers to Keep Up With Tech Companies](#)

The F.B.I. defended its hiring of a third-party company to break into an iPhone used by a gunman in last year's San Bernardino, Calif., mass shooting, telling some skeptical lawmakers on Tuesday that it needed to join with partners in the rarefied world of for-profit hackers as technology companies increasingly resist their demands for consumer information.

The Globe and Mail [Patents are no barrier to innovation, despite the myths](#)

Innovation and patents are related topics, but both are complex and not well understood. A common myth has it that patents constitute barriers to innovation. Not so. Examine our patent system in detail; it will be found to promote innovation. A fundamental requirement of our system is that the patent provide a complete disclosure of the invention in sufficient detail to enable anyone skilled in the relevant technology to manufacture and use it. Further, research and development is expensive.

Washington Post [Box CEO: Why the latest attempt by Congress on cybersecurity is already outdated](#)

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When the news broke that the FBI and the DOJ dropped their case against Apple, successfully cracking open the San Bernardino iPhone without the help of the consumer electronics giant, there was a collective sigh of relief from the technology industry and security experts. Apple avoided a precedent-setting event requiring them to break their own security; and the government was able to unlock a device that may lead to advances in their investigation.

The Hill [Republican warns of creeping threat of media regulation at FEC](#)

Publishers and filmmakers should be wary of Democrats at the Federal Election Commission trying to squeeze them out of an exemption created for the press, according to FEC Republican Commissioner Lee Goodman. Goodman used a five-page statement released Monday to scold Democrats on the commission for trying to continue an investigation into a company that created and distributed a conspiracy theory film ahead of the 2012 election that claimed that President Obama's real father was Franklin Marshall Davis, described as "an American Communist."

Huffington Post [For Entrepreneurs: How to Protect Your Intellectual Property](#)

In a digitally connected world, ideas are easy to share, distribute and, unfortunately, even steal. By definition, an entrepreneur is a person who "runs a small business and assumes all the risk and reward of a given business venture, idea, or good or service offered for sale. The entrepreneur is commonly seen as a business leader and innovator of new ideas and business processes." When the success of your business depends on the unique brand, ideas and assets you develop, the need to protect your ideas is essential.

New York Times [Google Charged With Breaking Europe's Antitrust Rules](#)

European officials charged Google on Wednesday with breaking the region's competition rules by favoring some of its services on the popular Android mobile software over those of its rivals. The charges are the latest chapter in Europe's continuing battle with technology companies that have come to dominate how the region's 500 million people use digital services including social media, like Facebook, and e-commerce, like Amazon.

Wired [Of Course Congress Is Clueless About Tech—It Killed Its Tutor](#)

WHEN THE DRAFT version of a federal encryption bill got leaked this month, the verdict in the tech community was unanimous. Critics called it ludicrous and technically illiterate—and these were the kinder assessments of the "Compliance with Court Orders Act of 2016," proposed legislation authored by the offices of Senators Diane Feinstein and Richard Burr. The encryption issue is complex and

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the stakes are high, as evidenced by the recent battle between Apple and the FBI.

The Hill [TaskRabbit joins Black Caucus effort to boost tech industry diversity](#)

The startup TaskRabbit is becoming the first company to partner with the Congressional Black Caucus to adopt a plan and goals for hiring more African-American employees. The announcement of the four-part plan came a little less than a week after the company named Stacy Brown-Philpot as CEO of the company. She is one of the few African-American CEOs at a prominent tech startup.

NOTABLE QUOTES

- *“People do not give up their rights when they move their private information from physical storage to the cloud. The government, however, has exploited the transition to cloud computing as a means of expanding its power to conduct secret investigations. As individuals and business have moved their most sensitive information to the cloud, the government has increasingly adopted the tactic of obtaining the private digital documents of cloud customers not from the customers themselves, but through legal process directed at online cloud providers like Microsoft.”*
 - [Microsoft lawsuit against U.S. government secrecy orders](#)
- *“I don’t think there’s any absolutists who think the government should be able to get at everything or the government should be able to get at nothing. Clearly in the old days, there was a wiretapping regime, and there were some benefits to it, and safeguards in it. And it seems like it’s likely even in this new day and age we’ll be able to establish the same sorts of things where people feel good about when the judiciary is involved and how that’s reviewed.”*
 - [Bill Gates, co-founder, Microsoft](#)
- *“Although the authors of ECPA tried to be forward-thinking, no one in 1986 appreciated the extent to which e-mail — and electronic communication in general — would so thoroughly displace other forms of communication. Meanwhile, the growth of cloud computing in recent years has only served to underline the antiquated nature of the law, putting an ever-growing amount of data into a setting vulnerable to warrantless government access. Law enforcement agencies are by no means alone in exploiting*

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this warrant-free loophole. Other government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service have used it as well.”

- [The Denver Post editorial board](#)
- *“We support making sure that law enforcement has the legal authorities, resources, and training it needs to solve crime, prevent terrorism, and protect the public. However, those things must be carefully balanced to preserve our customers’ security and digital information. We are ready and willing to engage in dialogue about how to strike that balance, but remain concerned about efforts to prioritize one type of security over all others in a way that leads to unintended, negative consequences for the safety of our networks and our customers.”*
 - [Tech industry open letter on the Burr-Feinstein encryption bill](#)
- *“We need legislation that is more attuned to the practical and technical realities of the new digital world and the long-term consequences of the decisions that we are making. Soon, our cars will be connected to the Internet and driving themselves, and our airplanes, hospitals, medical devices and financial networks will become fully digitally enabled. The choices we make today will not only impact the security of our mobile devices, but also the systems that protect our health records, critical infrastructure, automobiles and countless other physical and virtual assets. And as individuals, businesses and governments increasingly rely on digital platforms to communicate, collaborate and transact, our collective trust in modern technology is becoming one of the most important drivers of our future economic growth, shared prosperity and societal progress.”*
 - [Aaron Levie, CEO and co-founder, Box](#)
- *“The roadmap adopted by the encryption working group this week paves the path toward identifying solutions to the ongoing national debate surrounding encryption. Members of the working group agree that encryption is a critical tool for protecting Americans’ privacy and security and that private industry must continue to increase its effectiveness. However, challenges remain for law enforcement seeking to protect the American people from criminals and terrorists.”*
 - [Reps. Bob Goodlatte, John Conyers and Frank Pallone on encryption working group](#)