

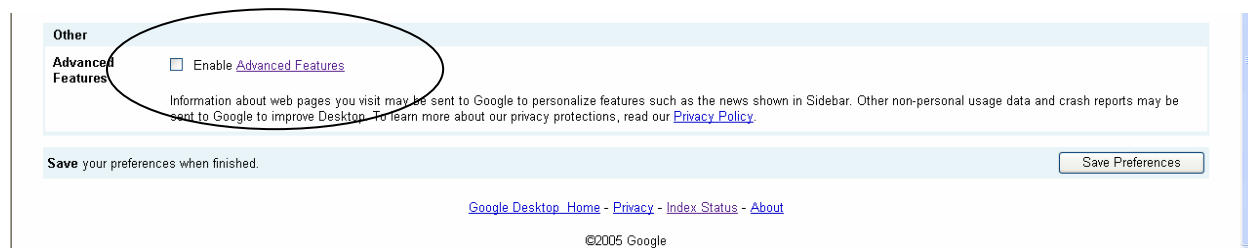
CIS Advisory
Google Desktop "Search Across Computers" Option
6-8-2006

CIS has become aware of a concern about the "Search Across Computers" option of Google Desktop. This option moves indexed information from the client's computer to Google servers if the "Enable Advanced Features" option of Google desktop is checked when Google desktop is installed. UNH faculty and staff who use Google Desktop and activate this option may be unknowingly uploading sensitive, confidential, or legally protected content to Google file servers. The USNH Policy on Use of Technological Resources (<http://usnholpm.unh.edu/USY/VI.Prop/F.htm>) requires all employees to protect the privacy of information, and to safeguard electronic and derivative information against unauthorized use and modification. Uploading information from UNH systems to non-UNH systems, such as Google file servers, without first carefully considering the ownership and security interests UNH may have in the information is imprudent and inconsistent with the basic principles of this policy and with established security measures that protect sensitive information on UNH systems.

As an interim measure, CIS recommends that any faculty or staff who use Google desktop check their settings to ensure they have not activated the "Search Across Computers" option. To check this setting:



1. Click on the Google icon on the Toolbar
2. Choose "Preferences" from the pop-up menu
3. Scroll down to "Other"
4. Make sure there is no check mark in the box to the left of "Enable Advanced Features" If there is a check mark, click on the box to remove it and then click "Save Preferences."



CIS will continue to investigate Google's plans to evolve the default settings and control over indexing and uploading options in Google Desktop. Options that by default index and upload content to off-campus systems should not be activated under any circumstances on personal computers that are used to log into the UNH e-mail systems, finance and HR systems, file sharing systems, and other systems and services that contain sensitive information, intellectual property, or information protected by laws such as HIPAA, GLB and FERPA. These personal computers include those that are used on the campus as well as computers that are used off-campus to access campus resources remotely. CIS will continue to evaluate this situation and post updates at <http://www.unh.edu/computer-security/index.html> as more information becomes available.