Welcome to the first issue of our new Surveillance Studies Centre (SSC) annual newsletter! We hope it gives a taste of what happens here at the Canadian hub of research into the rapidly growing world of surveillance. Though the SSC is new, it has grown from more than twenty years of serious study in this area and from a decade of working under the name “The Surveillance Project.”

Our concern with surveillance is broad, covering everything from street cameras to the currently controversial question of police and intelligence access to internet data (Bill C-30). We delve into the historical development of surveillance, especially in colonial and postcolonial settings and we try to keep current with new technical innovations such as whole body scanners at airports, drones on the border, or automated licence plate recognition used for example in police cars.

Equally, we follow what is going on in the domain of law and policy and within the various Canadian privacy commissions. We also have close connections with those working in the fields of human rights and civil liberties. But at the same time a strong focus of our research is how ordinary people respond to and engage with surveillance in everyday life. We have initiated several opinion polls on this and our students interview people such as users of social media, travellers crossing borders, police, businesspeople and others concerned with personal data.

This issue contains several stories from researchers and professors from around the world who have visited the SSC in the past year. As well you’ll find descriptions of two dimensions of our work, the major collaborative “New Transparency” project and SCAN, the Surveillance Cameras Awareness Network. The latter produced a new book during the year and the former is writing a high-impact report on Surveillance in Canada.
The recent explosion in massive open online courses may be a boon to the goal of broadly accessible education but it may also pose potentially high risks to privacy, according to Surveillance Studies Centre visitor, professor Helen Nissenbaum. “Education is an enormously important aspect of social life,” and one that might be threatened if approached as a consumer product, the New York University professor told a small audience at Queen’s University’s Brockington lecture in March.

A professor of Media, Culture, and Communication & Computer Science, Nissenbaum believes that the privacy concerns around such massive open online courses (MOOCs) arise from both the gathering of huge quantities of user data and their potential to be utilized in ways unknown to and uncontrolled by users. Such courses, generally offered free by provider companies such as Coursera, Udacity and edX, may involve well-known education institutions such as Stanford and MIT, and can have hundreds of thousands of registered students who agree to the use of their data in return for course participation.

Nissenbaum believes that the privacy policies covering such data-gathering and usage suffer from the same flaws as those of other large online operations such as Facebook and Google. They tend to be complex, written in a language difficult to understand, may contain clauses that allow for sharing of non-identifiable but also personally identifiable information with third parties or ‘business partners,’ indicate that terms of use can be changed effective immediately, and put the onus on users to check back frequently in case of such changes.

Nissenbaum argued that privacy in any sphere, but particularly with educational offerings, online or off, should be governed by the appropriate flow of information and accountable to existing norms and laws around the governing of such information. “Concern for privacy is concern that information should flow appropriately,” she said. Nissenbaum believes that MOOCs are currently governed by norms around the consumption of commercial goods rather than those around learning in a university environment.

She had concerns not only about the use of data gathered in such courses, but wondered if the minute data tracking of students—which may include the tracking of every variable from when a student pauses a video, revises an assignment or comments in a forum to how long it takes them to answer a quiz question—encourages the learning process.
Online Tool May Offer Privacy

By Alana Saulnier (PhD candidate, Sociology)

Whether we like it or not, every one of the searches we initiate in an online search engine (e.g., Google, Bing, Yahoo!, etc.) is tracked and logged by the host website. Most of us comply with this mandated “sharing” of information because of a perceived lack of alternatives, but a March seminar offered through the Surveillance Studies Centre suggests that data obfuscation may help users wield greater control over the information we share online. Data obfuscation is any activity or system that produces “misleading, false, or ambiguous data with the intention of causing confusion,” according to 2013 Brockington Visitorship scholar, Helen Nissenbaum, speaking at a Tuesday March 19 seminar on Do It Yourself Privacy through Obfuscation.

Nissenbaum acknowledged that the technique is a “weapon of the weak” in the battle for online privacy but believes it may be a good enough solution, and has even created a free online tool to help users obfuscate the personal information shared through their own online searches. “Privacy,” Dr. Nissenbaum contends, “is not about control or secrecy—it’s about the appropriate flows of information.” In other words, while we may not be opposed to sharing our information, we do have expectations about who has access to that information, as well as when, why, where and how it is shared. For Nissenbaum, expectations of “appropriate” flows of information are determined by context, informational norms, and purposes of use. Privacy regulations can be highly ineffective at meeting our expectations of appropriate flows of information—but that doesn’t mean we have no recourse.

Dr. Nissenbaum described TrackMeNot, a free downloadable software program that she co-created, as an obfuscation option that provides a means of resisting surveillance conducted by online search engines. The TrackMeNot program sends fake queries to search engine websites, serving to obfuscate the searches actually conducted. As Dr. Nissenbaum noted, “instead of hiding and constraining information, the principle is to provide more information.” Too much information.

Nissenbaum acknowledged that such obfuscation has received scientific and ethical critiques, including accusations that it is a form of deceit, adds a burden to the network, and pollutes the data store. Given the lack of alternatives, however, Nissenbaum maintains that the means are justified by the ends. Obfuscation serves as a “good enough” approach to protecting privacy online in an era and context that pays little heed to the individual and societal conceptions of appropriate flows of information.

Do-it-yourself obfuscating techniques, such as TrackMeNot, permit some independence from the interests of corporate and government actors that currently define acceptable standards of information sharing, Nissenbaum concluded.
Two presenters deserve special mention. Gary T. Marx, whose seminar provided us with an overview of his most recently completed book, has a historical connection to the field as one of a handful of scholars who contributed to an inaugural surveillance workshop—believed to be the first in the world—held at Queen’s University in 1993. Helen Nissenbaum, selected by the Queen’s University Senate to be the 2013 Brockington Visitor, provided a seminar on a Firefox extension, TrackMeNot, as a means of Do-it-yourself (DIY) privacy against data mining and profiling.

We continue to be very proud of the conceptual and geographic scope of our seminar series. The 2012-13 series included issues centrally related to space in Australia, Brazil, Canada, and across the Greece-Turkey border; theorizing feminist surveillance studies and gendering video surveillance; the consequences of identity registration in present-day India and along the Iberian Peninsula of the 14th-17th Centuries; surveillance and profiling and the role of the rule of law as a regulatory mechanism for such identification: consumer surveillance and retailing; and the online surveillance of children. Thanks to Joan Sharpe, Martin French, David Murakami Wood and David Lyon for their contributions to this year’s success.

If you are interested in presenting at the SSC Seminar Series, or if you have someone in mind, please do not hesitate to contact Sachil Singh (sachil.singh@queensu.ca). Please note that we finalize our seminar schedule no less than one month ahead of the respective fall and winter terms.
Who could have guessed that a Lakehead University professor’s incidental search for a quality bottle of wine would ultimately lead to the creation of a surveillance studies collection at Queen’s University? The Surveillance Studies Centre is partnering with Queen’s University Archives to establish what is believed to be the only surveillance-focused special collection in Canada. The project was initiated by Queen’s SSC post-doc Scott Thompson who has gathered an assortment of surveillance-related artifacts and documents that will serve as a foundation for the new archive. And yet Thompson’s personal collection would never have existed but for the curiosity of Lakehead University professor Gary Genosko as to why a particular wine could not be purchased in northern Ontario. “He wanted a special edition bottle of wine and discovered it could only be purchased in Toronto,” explains Thompson who worked as Genosko’s research assistant at that time. It turns out that the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) stocks shelves strictly according to the bulk sales made in that area, “sorting the country according to the type of liquor sold,” explains Thompson who soon parlayed the discovery into a masters thesis on the surveillance of drinking behaviors by the LCBO.

It was his search for an Ontario liquor permit book, a key tool in the LCBO’s post-prohibition-era efforts to tightly control Ontario citizens’ drinking patterns, that caused Thompson to try an innovative way to track down the elusive permit. Despite its widespread and requisite use between 1927 and 1962—without it alcohol could not be purchased at all and in it vendors would write each purchase—Thompson could not find a single permit at the provincial Archives of Ontario. He turned to eBay, where he not only discovered a permit but a steady trickle of other surveillance-related artifacts. But it was while conducting PhD research (at the University of Alberta) on the social impact of the government’s WWII National Registration and mobilization program that he realized he had to find a way to share his growing number of finds. Again, through eBay, Thompson was able to purchase Canadian National Registration Documents even though the Canadian government had long ago ordered documents from the program destroyed. “I realized they were too important for me to have. They are part of a shared culture and should be available for other researchers,” says Thompson who has continued gathering other surveillance-related items.

On arrival at Queen’s in January he began work with SSC director David Lyon and Queen’s archivist Jeremy Hale to set up the temporarily-named “Surveillance Studies Special Collection.” The collection is for materials related to the technologies and functioning of implemented surveillance programs and will include identity cards, passports, driver’s licenses, photos, institutional handbooks, manuals, and other materials. Donations will be housed in climate-controlled vaults and available to students, educators and the public—eventually scanned and posted on a special section of the Queen’s University Archives’ webpage. Interested contributors can email Scott Thompson at snt@queensu.ca. Please put “archives” in the subject line.
The New Transparency Project, a Major Collaborative Research Initiative funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, provides the majority of the funding for the SSC. Past and future events below:

The NewT’s culminating report *Transparent Lives: Surveillance in Canada* received strong positive reviews in May from peer reviewers selected by Athabaska University Press as well as from eight additional citizen reviewers who work in surveillance related fields and who were selected by editors Colin Bennett, Kevin Haggerty, David Lyon and Val Steeves to review the document for public accessibility. Editors have put in a concerted effort to respond to as many of the review comments as possible in order to have a document that summarizes the seven-year NewT research program’s findings for a general as well as academic audience. The report, which details nine key trends of surveillance in Canada, will be published in French and English and launched at the Politics of Surveillance workshop in May 2010.

The *Politics of Surveillance Workshop*, May 8-10 2014, at the University of Ottawa will attempt to respond to the question of what can be done about the problems/trends of surveillance in Canada as detailed in the Transparent Lives report. Focusing on the various political, legal, technical, and social instruments available it will involve practitioners from NGOs and the private sector, privacy commissioners and media participants. Panels will likely include the role of social activism (online and offline campaigns); the role of privacy in international and domestic law; the role of privacy-enhancing technologies (privacy by default/privacy by design); the role of the corporation in promoting accountability for personal data; the role of art, music and film in exposing surveillance; the role of political/legislative reform; the role of the media; the role of consultants as privacy advocates.

A NewT research workshop on *Doing Surveillance Studies* was held at Queen’s University’s Donald Gordon Centre May 30 – June 1. The workshop examined methodology and content of surveillance studies. Full report in the fall/winter newsletter.

The biannual *Surveillance Studies Summer Seminar* took place May 29 – June 5. Overseen by Professors David Murakami Wood, David Lyon, Val Steeves, and Kirstie Ball, the packed event for graduate students offered seminars and discussions around big themes—capitalism, regulation, the internet, resistance, the city, and colonialism—and their relationship to surveillance. Students also participated in the *Doing Surveillance Studies* workshop and planned and presented mock grant applications on surveillance related research projects. More info in our fall/winter newsletter.

For more information on NewT, see: http://www.newtransparency.org and the annual newsletters at http://www.sscqueens.org/Project_News
It was an honour and a pleasure to be a visiting PhD student at the SSC at Queen’s last year. During the six months I spent there, I had the opportunity to be in contact with researchers from multiple countries and a variety of fields, offering me a rich environment to work in and widen my academic perspective. Under the supervision of Professor David Murakami Wood, to whom I am deeply grateful, I was able to better define the focus of my thesis—a sociotechnical analysis of practices of government performed by video cameras, in Rio de Janeiro/Brazil—and at the same time, in sharing a common scholarship with my peers, to start a dialogue which will hopefully remain and strengthen over time.

I have known about the SSC since starting my research on surveillance practices in Brazil. As an international reference, the centre has been a source of quality research for the furthering of my studies. Subsequently, encouraged by my PhD supervisor, Professor Rosa Pedro, I applied for a scholarship with the Brazilian Federal Government to visit and study at the SSC. Fortunately, my application was accepted and, with the approval of the sociology department at Queen’s University, I received the opportunity to travel and be a part of your renowned facility.

During the internship, I partook in some special learning opportunities including meetings with Professor Wood and readings he recommended, constant dialogue and exchange with other scholars, the attendance and presentation of papers at the sociology symposium “Works in Progress,” and the Surveillance Studies Centre seminar series.

Before my internship at the SSC I was planning to investigate only the Integrated Security Command Centre (to be opened soon in Rio de Janeiro). Throughout my studies there, including readings and discussions with other scholars, I realized that I was on the right track and dedicated myself to improving my theoretical background on this theme.

I also accepted Professor Wood’s suggestion to add the Operation Centre of Rio de Janeiro (for civil contingencies) as another search field, and to extend my analyses to other forms of government performed by video cameras. Living in Canada was an amazing experience that felt like a completely different world, but that still managed to make me feel at home. I will cherish this period forever.

Thus I would like to extend my gratitude to the entire team at the SSC. A major thanks to all who supported me during my six months in Kingston. I made it! Now I am back in Brazil, batteries charged and full of ideas to strengthen my PhD research and continue with my academic pursuits.

A PhD student in psychosociology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rafael was at the SSC between April 2nd and September 30th (2012).
The idea of spending some time in Canada came to me after attending the fourth biannual Surveillance & Society conference held in London in April 2010. The opening talk by Professor David Lyon expanded my perspectives on surveillance studies and made me want to improve my knowledge by doing a post-doc at the SSC. Being part of the SSC team for a year was a unique experience. This is certainly one of the most important centres in surveillance studies and its success is due to both the competence of its permanent members and the plurality of visiting scholars, post-doc and PhD students from all over the world and from different academic contexts. The research conducted by the centre is innovative not only in its empirical approaches but also in the richness of the theoretical discussions brought about by the SSC team. These discussions were promoted especially during the SSC Seminars. I had the opportunity to present my work on surveillance in educational spaces and got some valuable suggestions from the audience. During the year, and with the incentive and support of the centre, I also participated in surveillance in schools and on university campuses. The second activity was the translation from Portuguese to English—with the help of Canadian scholars—of the book, Por uma Outra Globalização, written by Brazilian geographer Milton Santos. I believe his theoretical discussions about the role of information in the present globalization process are helpful to discussions about surveillance. Besides this rich academic and linguistic exchange, my stay in Kingston also resulted in an interesting social and cultural swap that went from potlucks to my participation as a musician in a Canadian samba band.

I am profoundly thankful to all SSC members for their gentle hospitality and for allowing me to enjoy a productive and unforgettable year. I must also express my gratitude to the government of Canada that, through the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), supported me with a one-year post-doc scholarship. I am equally grateful to the Free University of Brussel (VUB) and the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (FWO) for authorizing my absence from Belgium for this research leave in Canada. The knowledge I acquired during this experience in Canada is important not only for my present work in Belgium but also to my participation in the construction of a network of scholars interested in surveillance in Latin America and in Brazil, the country I am from.
Visiting Prof. Benefits from SSC stay

By Nelson Arteaga Botello

Years ago I had the opportunity to work with members of the Surveillance Studies Centre in different seminars and workshops, later getting involved as a collaborator with the NewT Project, but I’d always wished to spend more time at the SSC itself. I wanted to be in a place where I could discuss and deepen my understanding of the various surveillance forms developed in Latin America in general and Mexico in particular.

My research interest is focused on analyzing the impact of different monitoring devices designed to control crime and violence in the exercise of citizenship. An important related issue is that democratic institutions are still weak in Latin America. The SSC has widened my vision and expanded my perspective on the subject. The library and electronic resources, including access to a number of journals, gave me access to the work on border surveillance from different social science disciplines.

Although it was a short stay—May to August 2012 of my sabbatical—it was productive in every way. Various academic meetings not only allowed me to broaden my perspective on the issues of surveillance, but to learn a new method of working together that was very stimulating.

Through the diversity of disciplines that came together at the SSC, I was able to approach the subject of surveillance from the point of view of legal studies, urbanism, media and political studies. Postdoctoral students were a great incentive in exploring novel aspects, and especially emphasizing the complexity that national and regional logics have on the development of surveillance.

One of the most significant aspects of my stay was a series of interesting chats with colleagues who always included a reference to the forms of surveillance that appear in science fiction literature. This was unexplored territory for me, but now it has become a substantial element that stimulates my research.

A few months after my return, I joined the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, based in Mexico. Here I found a place to delve into the issues I raised during my stay, particularly the theme of deconstruction and reconfiguration of citizenship due to various contemporary surveillance logics.

Nelson Arteaga Botello is a professor and researcher with the Latino American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) México.
SSC Researchers Provide Report on Drones

By Ciara Bracken-Roche

The Surveillance Studies Centre has received a grant from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (OPC) to study drone use in Canada. Drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) are used for a wide range of surveillance purposes in the public and private sector in Canada. The rapidly emerging use of drones not only raises concerns for privacy of Canadian citizens but also around their control in the private market and the marketing of drones by Canadian companies.

While a majority of growth is within the military context, drones are increasingly utilized in the civilian sector to survey real-estate properties, locate missing persons, document natural disasters and protests, and to monitor environmental abuses by private corporations. They are used by forestry trusts, environmental researchers and private corporations to survey and assess otherwise inaccessible areas, for border control and coastal surveillance, to obtain images of highway accidents and other types of checking and monitoring tasks.

Despite these developments there appears to be a lag in public awareness about the implications and ubiquity of drone use. There are also serious implications for organizations accountable to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) for the safe, open and limited collection of personal information. Researchers at the SSC will conduct a brief historical study of UAV development and its rapidly expanding use in military and civilian contexts, provide an inventory of the privacy-sensitive aspects of UAV development in the private sector compared with the public sector, and examine and analyze the marketing materials of Canadian companies involved in the manufacture and sale of UAVs. They will also investigate public knowledge of and opinion regarding UAVs in Canada and elsewhere.

The SSC will provide a report to the OPC listing specific recommendations related to privacy requirements, appropriate use, and governance of the development of UAVs in Canada. The research project is funded under the (OPC) 2013-2014 Contributions Program.
Spotlight on Faculty: Elia Zureik

Long-time Queen’s University professor Elia Zureik was celebrated for twenty years of surveillance research in early June but the roots of his interest in the subject may go right to the beginning of his career.

Dr. Zureik came to Queen’s University in 1971 to teach race and ethnic relations. Alongside his official teaching responsibilities he delved into research on the Middle East and in particular on his homeland of Palestine. His first book, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism*, published in 1979, was one of the first studies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a sociological perspective. It was an area of study that would provide fertile ground for later studies on surveillance methods to control colonized populations.

But first his research and teaching interests took him into the field of information technology. “In the early 1980s it became clear the impact that computers would have on society,” recalls Dr. Zureik. At that time he taught one of the first Canadian courses on the educational, economic and social impacts of the then-new information technologies. One of those impacts was workplace monitoring, an often privacy-invasive form of workplace surveillance. Dr. Zureik and Queen’s sociology professor, Dr. Vincent Mosco, co-led a large study on automation in the Canadian phone industry. The six-province study examined job loss through computerization but also the impact of performance monitoring on telephone company workers who felt de-humanized by the new monitoring technologies.

By 1993 Dr. Zureik’s growing interest in surveillance led him to co-organize with professor David Lyon what may have been the first-ever surveillance studies conference, which resulted in their co-edited volume, *Computers, Surveillance, and Privacy*. “It really attracted a lot of attention from reviewers and encompassed people who were to be the trail-blazers in the (surveillance) field, recalls Dr. Zureik. His ensuing surveillance studies contributions included research on the over-stated 1990s promises of companies that marketed biometric surveillance technologies, his pivotal role in helping found the Surveillance Studies Project—which evolved into the Surveillance Studies Centre—and an extensive nine-country survey on citizens’ understanding and experience of surveillance technologies.

But his interest in the Palestinian situation never abated. His two core areas of research coalesced in a 2011 volume, *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine*, co-edited with professors David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban. Dr. Zureik retired in June 2005 but continues numerous projects including serving as a board member of the Surveillance Studies Centre, helping to establish a program in sociology and anthropology at a new university in Doha, Qatar, and his own research. He won the 2008 Queen’s University Award for Excellence in Research.

Quotes about Elia Zureik sent to celebrate his works:

Elia Zureik is a pioneer in surveillance studies, one of those who helped put this now flourishing enterprise on the intellectual map.

---- Professor James Rule

A man for all seasons and many reasons and multiple methods, national and international research fields; a value-inspired vision, wrapped in skill and respect for the scientific method; a nice guy with a sense of humour, and a pioneer of our field who saw the potentials so many years ago.

---- Professor Gary T. Marx
Events

The Politics of Surveillance Workshop
University of Ottawa
May 8 - 10, 2014

Transparent Lives: Surveillance in Canada Report
Public Launch
Ottawa (May 8) at the POS conference (above)

For the events calendar, go to:
http://www.sscqueens.org/events/calendar

Follow the Surveillance Studies Centre (SSC) on Twitter at @sscqueens

A display case of surveillance literature and historical artifacts set up at Queen’s University’s Stauffer Library during the Brockington visitorship of Helen Nissenbaum — photo by Joan Sharpe

The SSC Newsletter was compiled and edited by Anne Linscott

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