

New Yorker launches online anonymous tip system

NEW YORK, US: The New Yorker magazine has unveiled a new online system for anonymous whistleblower tips, based on technology developed by the late Internet activist Aaron Swartz and a former hacker.

The system, called Strongbox, was unveiled amid an uproar in the news media over the US government seizure of phone logs from the Associated Press, in a probe of a news leak that officials said threatened national security.

"This morning, The New Yorker launched Strongbox, an online place where people can send documents and messages to the magazine, and we, in turn, can offer them a reasonable amount of anonymity," senior editor Amy Davidson said.

"The underlying code, given the name DeadDrop, will be open-source, and we are very glad to be the first to bring it out into the world, fully implemented."

Suicide

Swartz, an activist who committed suicide in January as he faced a potential prison sentence for breaking into a university research database, developed the system with Kevin Poulsen, a former hacker who is now an editor at Wired magazine.

The New Yorker said the system was designed to avoid putting media organisations at the centre of investigations of news leaks.

"Readers and sources have long sent documents to the magazine and its reporters, from letters of complaint to classified papers," Davidson said.

"But, over the years, it's also become easier to trace the senders... Strongbox addresses that; as it's set up, even we won't be able to figure out where files sent to us come from. If anyone asks us, we won't be able to tell them."

The system aims to encourage the anonymous submission of newsworthy information, in the manner of WikiLeaks and other Internet sites.

The Wall Street Journal set up its own tip system, called SafeHouse, in May 2011.

Poulsen said Swartz agreed to work on the secure-submission system "with the understanding that the code would be open-source."

"The New Yorker, which has a long history of strong investigative work, emerged as the right first home for the system,"

Poulsen said in a posting on the New Yorker website.

Source: AFP, via I-Net-Bridge

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