

Protecting Consumers in a Technical World

Joe Calandrino, Federal Trade Commission

Abstract:

The Federal Trade Commission is the US government's primary consumer protection agency. The agency can take action against businesses that deceive consumers or unfairly place them at risk, and its reach stretches from advertising to privacy practices across broad sectors of the economy. As advanced technologies have become ubiquitous in our lives, the FTC's mission has required a greater appreciation of technology. This increased technical focus has permeated nearly all aspects of the agency and led to the creation of the Office of Technology Research and Investigation (OTech).

This talk will provide an introduction to the FTC through technology-focused examples of the work that it does. From there, we will pivot to the value of technologists and technical research to the agency, discussing how they can help us better protect consumers. We will explore the critically important role that outside researchers in particular can play in promoting consumer welfare.

Bio:

Joe Calandrino is the research director of the Federal Trade Commission's Office of Technology Research and Investigation. His office conducts technical research related to the FTC's consumer protection mission, examining topics such as consumer fraud, online advertising, financial technologies, and connected devices. Prior to joining the FTC, he provided technical consulting services, including leading a company's security and privacy consulting practice and serving as an expert in a variety of legal disputes. He received his doctorate in Computer Science from Princeton University, where his research focused on the privacy and security challenges of emerging technologies--from electronic voting machines to recommender systems. He holds a BS in Computer Science and Mathematics from the University of Virginia.