EA opts Origin users out of “real-name sharing” after complaints



reader comments

67 with 36 posters participating

Share this story

Electronic Arts is opting all users out of the “real name sharing” option on its Origin gaming service following complaints that some users may have been entered into the program without their consent.

The option to “show my real name on my profile” (as opposed to just sharing an online handle) is buried in the privacy settings for every EA Origin account, as it is for many other

gaming networks. But Randi Lee Harper, the founder of the nonprofit Online Abuse Prevention Initiative, recently noted in a Twitter thread that her real name was being shared via the account without any opt-in.

Harper said anecdotal reports and spot checks of others with Origin accounts showed that the setting “has been seemingly randomly enabled” for a number of other Origin users. Accounts created between 2013 and 2015 seem to have more likelihood of having the option enabled by default, Harper said, but she added that she “can’t find any kind of commonality in the data. It seems so random.” (New accounts created today default the real name sharing to be off.)

“I’m of the opinion that there is never a situation that you want to make it possible for a random stranger to link your gaming account to your real name,” Harper wrote. “People that you voluntarily friend, OK, that’s a different story. That this was defaulted to ‘on’ for some people… EA, what the fuck.”

In response to these reports, EA said it is opting all Origin players out of real-name sharing and investigating what, if anything, happened to cause the reported privacy breach in the first place.

“Player privacy is of the utmost importance to us,” EA said in a statement provided to Ars. “We’ve recently began hearing from some of our players that their Origin accounts defaulted to share real names associated with their account. That should be an opt-in setting… It’s important to us that real names are shared only by players who truly want to. We appreciate the community’s engagement on this, and we apologize to our players for any disruption or extra steps this may cause.”

EA’s problem mirrors one faced by Microsoft early last year, when some users complained their Xbox Live accounts were sharing their real names without consent. After investigating,

Microsoft said in a short statement provided to Mashable at the time that “we’ve addressed the issue some users may have experienced with their profile.”

Whatever the results of EA’s investigation, this should serve as a timely reminder to always double-check the privacy settings on all of your online accounts to make sure they match your preferences. You never know when the “default” sharing options may not match up with what you (or even the corporations behind those accounts) think they should be.

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1459553