



The End of the WURLd as We Know It?

You know the drill. You need to book a flight — and fast. You type something quickly into the search bar and hope for the best, figuring you'll recognize the right link when it comes up. But unfortunately, bad actors on the Internet are banking on your inattention.

Sites are continually being set up that look *almost* identical to sites you are familiar with and tricking many consumers into entering sensitive data. The usual modus operandi is to create a link that appears to lead to a legitimate or familiar site but actually sends unsuspecting browsers to a phishing page where their goal is to harvest your personal information. As criminals get more and more devious, the links, sites and even fake graphics and logos are simultaneously getting more sophisticated, a losing proposition for the rest of us.

Because of the growing number of these incidents and the threat to consumers, tech leaders have been forced to act.

Researchers are now focused on simply detecting the fake URLs amid the legitimate ones and creating warnings for the public. To that end, they have launched an open source tool called "TrickURI," with the goal of flagging suspect sites.

As you can imagine, flagging all fake sites on the Internet is a huge task but revealing how many exist will inform further action. Of course, new fake sites are created every minute, adding exponentially to the problem.

Plus, differentiating the good from the bad is a real challenge, so tech lead-

ers are being cautious about flagging legitimate sites mistakenly.

Early concerns from the public include suspecting bias on Google's part that the mega company would inordinately tip the benefits toward themselves and their company's or shareholder's interests.

Google Chrome's security team has also been looking at ways to make website addresses more secure. In September of 2018 they suggested the

seemingly radical idea of phasing out uniform (or universal) resource locators, or URLs.

However, nobody is proposing reconfiguring the structure of the Internet. The discussion centers on changing how the address of the site you are visiting is displayed. This cosmetic change could allow consumers to gain a better understanding of where they actually are in cyberspace, in turn increasing security.



• Newman, Lily Hay. "Google Takes Its First Steps Toward Killing the URL." *Wired*. January 30, 2019. Accessed January 30, 2019. <https://www.wired.com/story/google-chrome-kill-url-first-steps/amp>.

URL stands for "uniform resource locator" and is shorthand for website address.