# chapter twenty

## Movies and media

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20.1 Introduction

In today’s digital world, movies and media have a large influence on the population, in both informing and misinforming people. With the spread of mobile computers, one observes the increasing role of media in influencing younger populations. YouTube, online streaming, and on-demand media and television easily fill an individual’s downtime, since everything is available to autonomously watch whenever one desires.

This chapter aims to provide a list of and commentary on some fictional movies and documentaries among the many cybersecurity-related films. The commentary provided is not a film critique, but information about the content from a cybersecurity point of view.

(Films are listed by date from the most recent in each category.)

20.2 Classic movies

The following are a few classic movies that are interesting to watch given their historical perspective on security. Watching these movies mainly illustrates how security issues have changed and how the future of security and privacy were envisioned in the past.

20.2.1 Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984)

The first movie that one should view before anything else is Nineteen Eighty-Four, based on George Orwell’s novel by the same name. The story is about a man in a totalitarian system of a fictional country where everybody is watched, and history is rewritten as desired by a supreme leader, “Big Brother.” Michael Radford directed this movie starring actors John Hurt, Richard Burton, and Suzanna Hamilton. When Orwell’s book was originally published in 1949, the society that he imagined was almost impossible to conceive, yet now it is arguably our reality. With massive surveillance and tools that can transform any laptop or mobile device into a surveillance camera, this masterpiece is extremely relevant to the modern day.

20.2.2 Three Days of the Condor (1975)

Classic movies with their rich dialogue can be a very good source of information to put everything in perspective, and this is particularly true when it comes to cybersecurity. This movie follows the story of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) researcher who finds all his coworkers dead and must outwit those responsible until he figures out who he can trust. Directed by Sydney Pollack and based on a novel by James Grady, this film takes a different look at security agencies and how they operate. It received an Oscar nomination in 1976.
20.2.3 Sebastian (1968)

This is a movie that might not easily be found on video streaming services, but is especially interesting to watch. The movie is about Sebastian, a former Oxford professor, who in the late 1960s directed the all-female decoding office of the British Intelligence Agency. This is a British film, directed by David Greene, and is based on a story by Leo Marks and Gerald Vaughan-Hughes.

20.2.4 Stolen Identity (1953)

This is one of the first movies on identity theft. It tells the story of an Austrian taxi driver who dreams of going to the United States. He cannot, however, because he does not have proper papers or identification. One day, an American businessman is waiting for his cab, when another man kills him. The taxi driver grabs the dead man’s papers and takes over his identity. The film depicts a classic example of old-style identity theft by possessing someone else’s paper documentation, something that nowadays with more and more smart card is less probable.

20.2.5 The Great Impersonation (1942)

There are two versions of this movie: one from 1935 directed by John Rawlins and a 1942 version directed by Alan Crosland. Both are based on the novel written by E. Phillips Oppenheim, which was published in 1920. The story is about an unconscious man who is found in a boat, which has drifted to the landing of an isolated African outpost. There, Baron von Regenstein, an enemy agent, recognizes the man as his exact double, Sir Edward Dominey, with whom von Ragenstein went to school. He plots to kill Dominey and pose as the dead man. This is a fictional movie taking place in the early 1900s, but like Stolen Identity (preceding item), it provides an interesting perspective on how one could change their identity in the past.

20.3 Fictional action and drama movies

During the last two decades, several Hollywood-style movies and TV series were released with plots focused on cybersecurity, although many of these are entertainment films, not necessarily cinematically valuable. Each of them reflects the mood of society at a specific period and portrays scenarios that might have once been thought futuristic, but now have become reality.

20.3.1 Snowden (2016)

Oliver Stone directed this film about Edward Snowden’s life, and how, disillusioned with the intelligence community, he left the National Security Agency (NSA) and decided to leak classified information. Snowden then becomes a traitor to some, a hero to others, and is forced to live in exile in Russia. The movie depicts Snowden’s life from youth up until the time that he decides to leave the agency and reveal the US surveillance program to the press. Although this work is a dramatized depiction and not a documentary, the film gives a realistic view of Snowden’s life, as well as his work and social environments.
20.3.2 Blackhat (2015)

This movie follows a talented hacker released from a 15-year prison sentence to help solve a case involving parts of code he wrote when he was young. This code has appeared in malware that triggered a terrorist attack in a nuclear power plant in China. The main theme of this movie is in fact all about cybersecurity, as it involves a terrorist attack on a nuclear power plant by passing malware through PDF files by e-mail. It is a very realistic scenario for those who are familiar with Stuxnet, a malicious computer worm, first identified in 2010 and responsible for causing substantial damage to Iran’s nuclear program. Although it includes this hacking case in the plot, this movie by Michael Mann is largely a regular action film.

20.3.3 The Imitation Game (2014)

Most people in the cybersecurity field are familiar with the history of modern encryption, Alan Turing, and the Enigma machine. The Enigma machine, invented by German engineer Arthur Scherbius, was used from the early 1920s to protect commercial, diplomatic, and military communication. Then during the Second World War, the Germans took over the Enigma machine, improved it, and used it to code messages during the war. In 1939, Britain received information about the Germans’ use of the machine and Alan Turing, Gordon Welchman, and others worked on cracking the Enigma code. This Oscar-winning movie, directed by Morten Tyldum, depicts the real-life story of cryptanalyst Alan Turing and how he and his team broke German coded messages during the Second World War. There have been numerous articles and books written about the Enigma code breach. However, this movie depicts and summarizes Turing’s work and life well, although it is a Hollywood depiction of a true story, and therefore, not all events portrayed are entirely historically accurate.

20.3.4 Identity Thief (2013)

Directed by Seth Gordon and written by Craig Mazin, this movie begins by portraying how one can become the victim of identity theft. It follows the story of a man from Denver who is tracking down a woman from Florida who has stolen his identity to finance a luxurious lifestyle, destroying his credit. Although the initial scenes show the consequences and impact of identity theft on a person's life, the subsequent parts of the movie are simply a comical chase between the two characters.

20.3.5 Catch Me if You Can (2002)

The story of Frank Abagnale Jr. inspired director Steven Spielberg to make this interesting and entertaining movie that depicts the life of a con artist who poses and passes using many illegitimate identities. The movie shows the social engineering and behaviors that can be used to approach victims of identity theft. The case of Abagnale is interesting, in that it provides valuable discussion material for its portrayals of social engineering and identity theft, as he claimed to have had at least eight identities and escaped police custody twice. After serving time in prison, he began working for the federal government and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

20.3.6 Antitrust (2001)

This movie follows a computer programmer whose dream job at a Portland-based firm turns nightmarish when he discovers his boss has a secret and ruthless means of
dispatching antitrust problems. Made in 2001, the film is still watchable in 2017, although a lot of its depicted technology (CD, DVD, and flash memory sticks) is now obsolete. From a cybersecurity point of view, the different techniques used to hack into each side of the system are still valid, and the film demonstrates the vulnerability of the systems despite all its security procedures and technologies.

20.3.7 **Office Space (1999)**

This light, entertaining comedy is the story of three company workers who hate their jobs and decide to rebel against their greedy boss. Although it is not about cybersecurity per se, the film shows how employees of a company can gradually become sources of insider threats. The movie exaggerates its characters for comedic effect, but has fundamental truths in what the director Mike Judge tries to convey to the viewer. The behavior of managers and how employees are treated pushes the employees to neglect protecting their organization and even themselves ultimately becoming a threat to the security of the organization.

20.3.8 **The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999)**

Directed by Anthony Minghella and based on the novel written by Patricia Highsmith, this movie is an entertaining drama that illustrates how it is sometimes very easy to convince people with very little information. The movie is not about cybersecurity, but is a good resource to show how social engineers with good observational skills of human behavior can easily go so far as to pretend, convincingly, to be someone else.

20.3.9 **Hackers (1995)**

A young boy is arrested by the US Secret Service for writing a computer virus and is banned from using a computer until his 18th birthday. Director Iain Softley and writer Rafael Moreu incorporated many of the more common cyberattack scenarios into this movie. From breaking into a supercomputer and dumpster diving, and phone tapping to changing the record on databases, the movie portrays a good overview of the new era of cybersecurity. Also, to some degree, it illustrates how the hacker community operates.

20.3.10 **The Net (1995)**

Computer programmer Angela Bennett realizes that her colleagues at her new freelance job are suspiciously dying. The story becomes more complicated following a trip to Mexico when she realizes that her identity has been erased. Directed by Irwin Winkler and written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris, this is another early movie on cybersecurity packed with a complex plot line.

20.3.11 **Sneakers (1992)**

This thriller is all about computers, cryptography, government espionage, and the secret service, as well as deception, betrayal, and friendships. Made in 1992, this movie is almost as relevant now as it was in the past. All events in the movie are security related, and it includes surveillance, social engineering, encryption, and tailgating. Directed by Phil Alden Robinson, with actors such as Robert Redford and Sidney Poitier, this movie still is a very entertaining film.
20.4 Documentaries

There are many documentary films on cybersecurity. The following are a few that are worth watching.

20.4.1 Citizenfour (2014)

Edward Snowden is a former contractor at the CIA and US NSA. While working for the NSA, he downloaded NSA documents onto a thumbnail drive and then contacted journalists MacAskill and Greenwald from The Guardian. The three arranged to meet in a hotel in Hong Kong with documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras, who filmed the encounter and their discussion. As shown in this documentary, the documents that Snowden brought to the meeting revealed in detail how the NSA is using Presidential Policy Directive 20, a top-secret document issued in October 2012, to tap fiber-optic cables, intercept telephone landing points, and bug communication on a global scale. An Academy Award winner for Best Documentary and a long list of other awards, this film shows the potential dangers and breadth of governmental surveillance. The viewer feels the anxiousness, fear, and suspense, like being with these people in the meeting room in real time. No matter if one supports what Snowden did or not, seeing this film is an eye-opener for surveillance programs and how people's cybersecurity and privacy can be compromised in a surveillance state. Without question, viewing this film is a must from a human factors point of view, as it illustrates the state of mind of those involved in surveillance and how the privacy of citizens is not only compromised but they are also under watch Orwellian-style.

20.4.2 “State of Surveillance” (2016)

In this episode of Vice on HBO, cofounder Shane Smith conducts an in-depth interview with NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden along with the presentation of a series of the stories supporting Snowden's findings. This documentary reveals how easy it is to run a surveillance program and collect unimaginable information about anybody just through their own smart devices. The case is made for how the US government managed to run a massive surveillance program, making this a must-see for anyone interested in surveillance programs.

20.4.3 America's Surveillance State (2014)

This six-part documentary series is directed by Danny Schechter, who also directed America Before the Bubble Bursts (2006), WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception (2004), and Beyond “JFK”: The Question of Conspiracy (1992). In this series, he dissects current US surveillance strategies and reviews how, in the digital world with mass surveillance tools and technologies, a citizen's privacy is fundamentally compromised. He concludes that human society must adjust to the reality that whatever one does or says is watched can be recorded at all times.

20.4.4 The Hacker Wars (2014)

This documentary by Vivien Lesnik Weisman presents profiles of Internet hackers who break into government and big business computer networks. It also explores the hacktivist militant group that includes Andrew “weev” Aurenheimer, Prodigy, Jeremy Hammond, and journalist Barrett Brown. The documentary includes comments from
NSA whistleblower Thomas Drake, Anonymous’ attorney Jay Leiderman, and journalist Glenn Greenwald. It provides a good inside look into some militant hackers’ lives and their perspectives on their actions.

20.4.5 “Defeating the Hackers” (2013–2014)
This is the third episode of the 12-episode BBC documentary series, Horizon. It explores the world of hackers that are out to steal money and identities and wreak havoc with people’s online lives and the scientists who are joining forces to help defeat them. It includes two men who uncovered the world’s first cyberweapon, the pioneers of what is called ultraparanoid computing, and the computer expert who worked out how to hack into cash machines.

20.5 Informative media
There are several informative videos available as YouTube videos from different sources. In this section, more reliable and informative ones are reviewed.

20.5.1 “Kevin Mitnick” (2015)
This talk is at Live Hack at CeBIT Global Conferences 2015. Kevin David was arrested in 1995 and then spent five years in prison for various computer-related and communications-related crimes. He is now a computer security consultant and author. This is an interesting talk, although it is now somewhat dated.

20.5.2 “Glenn Greenwald and Edward Snowden live on stage at #CGC15” (2015)
This is a recording of Glenn Greenwald and Edward Snowden live on stage at the CeBIT Global Conferences 2015.

Uploaded by VPRO, this is a documentary television series by the Dutch public broadcasting organization. This Zero Days video explores online safety. A foreboding voice informs us near the opening that “…our entire power supply can be cut off, … our systems can be taken over, … hospitals deprived of power, would cease to function, … and, … it’s not if, it’s when.” The documentary then elaborates on vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers. There are many other videos available in the “Zero Days” series on YouTube.

20.5.4 Anonymous—The Hacker Wars (2015)
This documentary gives an inside look at a hacker community and their activities and perspectives. It includes Andrew Aurenheimer, hacker hero Jeremy Hammond, and journalist Barrett Brown.

20.5.5 Science of Surveillance (2015)
This video takes viewers into the disturbing world of surveillance technology and scans the latest and future technologies used to spy on the private lives of citizens. This is more like propaganda for showing the good side of surveillance and spy agency advertising.
20.5.6 **Anonymous Documentary—Inside a Hacker’s World full documentary (2014)**

This is a full documentary about Anonymous, an international network of activist and hacktivist entities that was founded in 2003. More information about the group is available on their website http://anonofficial.com/.

20.5.7 **TED Talks**

- “Governments don’t understand cyberwarfare. We need hackers” by Rodrigo Bijou (2015)
- “How to avoid surveillance ... with the phone in your pocket” by Christopher Soghoian (2015)
- “Government surveillance—This is just the beginning” by Christopher Soghoian (2013)
- “Your phone company is watching” by Malte Spitz (2012)
- “Hire the hackers!” by Misha Glenny (2011)
- “Cracking Stuxnet, a 21st-century cyberweapon” by Ralph Langner (2011)

20.6 **Podcasts**

There are many free and subscription-based podcasts that are available to download or listen to online. They address a range of cybersecurity issues from beginners to advanced levels. The following are just a few selected ones.

20.6.1 **Security now**

Security Now is a program for both news and tech junkies, providing analysis and detailed technical discussion of security headlines.

20.6.2 **Defensive security**

Defensive Security is a weekly information security podcast which reviews recent high-profile security breaches, data breaches, malware infections, and intrusions to identify lessons that we can learn and apply to the organizations we protect.

20.6.3 **Exploring information security**

The Exploring Information Security podcast interviews a different professional each week exploring topics, ideas, and disciplines within information security. Prepare to learn, explore, and grow your security mind-set.

20.6.4 **The social-engineer podcast**

The Social-Engineer podcast is an amalgamation of indie music, deep interviews with security experts, and a topical roundtable discussion about pretexting strategies companies are most likely to encounter.
20.6.5  Tenable

Tenable covers the latest in security news, vulnerabilities, and Tenable’s Nessus and Security Center products.

20.6.6  OWASP security

This podcast focuses on all aspects of web application security. Many of the episodes are short interviews with experts in this field. This podcast helps readers learn about or keep on top of web application security topics.

References

America’s Surveillance State (2014)
Director: Danny Schechter
Writers: Michael German, Roy Singham, Thomas Drake Himself, Sam Antar, Himself, and Thomas S. Blanton
Stars: Michael German, Roy Singham, and Sam Antar
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4284058/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1=
Available on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI1NdigJHP0

“Anonymous—The hacker wars” (2015)
Directors: Vivien Lesnik Weisman
Writers: Vivien Lesnik Weisman and Meredith Raithel Perry
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku9edEKvGuY
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4047350/

“Anonymous documentary—Inside a hacker’s world full documentary” (2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcAhsI2wo8I

Antitrust (2001)
Director: Peter Howitt
Writer: Howard Franklin
Stars: Ryan Phillippe, Tim Robbins, and Rachael Leigh Cook
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0218817

Blackhat (2015)
Director: Michael Mann
Writer: Morgan Davis Foehl
Stars: Chris Hemsworth, Viola Davis, and Wei Tang
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2717822/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

Catch Me If You Can (2002)
Director: Steven Spielberg
Writers: Frank Abagnale Jr. (book) and Jeff Nathanson (screenplay)
Stars: Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hanks, and Christopher Walken
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0264464/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1
Citizenfour (2014)
Director: Laura Poitras
Stars: Edward Snowden, Glenn Greenwald, and William Binney
https://citizenfourfilm.com

“Cracking Stuxnet, a 21st-century cyber weapon” (2011)
TED Talk by Ralph Langner
https://www.ted.com/talks/ralph_langner_cracking_stuxnet_a_21st_century_cyberweapon

“Defeating the Hackers” (2013–2014)
Director: Kate Dart
Episode 3 of 12
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0391z20
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQJMc6FdcvQ&t=1620s

“Glenn Greenwald and Edward Snowden live on stage at #CGC15” (2015)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3JVWqgLQ&t=1699s

“Governments do not understand cyber warfare. We need hackers” (2015)
TED Talk by Rodrigo Bijou
https://www.ted.com/talks/rodrigo_bijou_governments_don_t_understand_cyber_warfare_we_need_hackers

“Government surveillance—This is just the beginning” (2013)
TED Talk by Christopher Soghoian
https://www.ted.com/talks/christopher_soghoian_government_surveillance_this_is_just_the_beginning

Hackers (1995)
Director: Iain Softley
Writer: Rafael Moreu
Stars: Jonny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie, and Jesse Bradford
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113243/?ref_=nv_sr_1

“Hire the Hackers!” (2011)
TED Talk by Misha Glenny
https://www.ted.com/talks/misha_glenny_hire_the_hackers

“How to avoid surveillance … with the phone in your pocket” (2015)
TED Talk by Christopher Soghoian
https://www.ted.com/talks/christopher_soghoian_a_brief_history_of_phone_wiretapping_and_how_to_avoid_it

Identity Thief (2013)
Director: Seth Gordon
Writers: Craig Mazin (screenplay) and Jerry Eeten (story)
Stars: Jason Bateman, Melissa McCarthy, and John Cho
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2024432/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1
“Kevin Mitnick” (2015)
Live Hack at CeBIT Global Conferences 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtzZBTjKngw&t=1974s

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)
Director: Michael Radford
Writers: George Orwell (book) and Michael Radford (screenplay)
Stars: John Hurt, Richard Burton, and Suzanna Hamilton
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087803/?ref_=fn_al_tt_8

*Office Space* (1999)
Director: Mike Judge
Writer: Mike Judge
Stars: Ron Livingston, Jennifer Aniston, and David Herman
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151804/

“Science of Surveillance” (2015)
Produced by National Geographic Explorer science of surveillance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXIonD93H4Y

*Sebastian* (1968)
Director: David Greene
Writers: Leo Marks (book) and Gerald Vaughan-Hughes (screenplay)
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0063570/

*Sneakers* (1992)
Director: Phil Alden Robinson
Writers: Phil Alden Robinson and Lawrence Lasker
Stars: Robert Redford, Dan Aykroyd, and Sidney Poitier
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105435/?ref_=ttmd_ph_tt1

*Snowden* (2016)
Director: Oliver Stone
Writers: Kieran Fitzgerald and Oliver Stone
Stars: Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Melissa Shailene Woodley
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3774114/

*State of Surveillance* (2016)
Produced by Vice News
Stars: Ben Anderson, Andreas Bakke Foss, and Jason Leopold
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5764906/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1
Available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucRWyGKBVzo

*Stolen Identity* (1953)
Director: Gunther von Fritsch
Writers: Alexander Lernet-Holenia (book) and Robert Hill (screenplay)
Stars: Donald Buka, Joan Camden, and Francis Lederer
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0046372/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2
The Great Impersonation (1935)
Director: Alan Crosland
Writers: E. Phillips Oppenheim (book) and Eve Greene (screenplay)
Stars: Edmund Lowe, Valerie Hobson, and Wera Engels
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026438/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

The Hacker Wars (2014)
Director: Vivien Lesnik Weisman
Writers: Vivien Lesnik Weisman and Meredith Raithel Perry
Stars: Andrew “weev” Auernheimer, Andrew Blake, and Barrett Brown
Available on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku9edEKvGuY

The Imitation Game (2014)
Director: Morten Tyldum
Writers: Andrew Hodges (book) and Graham Moore (screenplay)
Stars: Benedict Cumberbatch, Keira Knightley, Allen Leech, Rory Kinnear, and Mark Strong
http://theimitationgamemovie.com

The Net (1995)
Director: Irwin Winkler
Writers: John Brancato and Michael Ferris
Stars: Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam, and Dennis Miller
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113957/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999)
Director: Anthony Minghella
Writers: Patricia Highsmith (book) and Anthony Minghella (screenplay)
Stars: Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Jude Law
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0134119/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

Three Days of the Condor (1975)
Director: Sydney Pollack
Writers: James Grady (book) and Lorenzo Semple Jr. (screenplay)
Stars: Robert Redford, Faye Dunaway, and Cliff Robertson
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0073802/

“Your phone company is watching” (2012)
TED Talk by Malte Spitz
https://www.ted.com/talks/malte_spitz_your_phone_company_is_watching

“Zero days—has security leaked for sale” (2015)
VPRO series by Dutch public broadcasting organization
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpYTE8-plZA&t=1354s
Podcasts

Security Now
https://www.grc.com/securitynow.htm

Defensive Security
https://defensivesecurity.org/category/podcast/

Exploring Information Security
http://www.timothydeblock.com/eis/

The Social-Engineer Podcast
https://www.social-engineer.org/category/podcast/

Tenable
http://www.tenable.com/podcast

OWASP Security
https://www.owasp.org/index.php/OWASP_Podcast