

Fortunately, Virgin Mobile Australia has a solution: a service called Dialing Under the Influence (D.U.I.). Before heading out for a night of debauchery, a Virgin Mobile customer simply dials 333, then the number of someone who shouldn't be called midbender — a boss, a recent breakup, the cute boy who works two cubicles over. The number is then rendered unreachable on that handset until 6 a.m. the next morning, by which time the tongue-loosening effects of the evening's alcohol will presumably have worn off.

Kerry Parkin, a Virgin Mobile Australia spokeswoman, admits that the D.U.I. service, which costs about 19 cents per blacklisted number, was initially hatched as a promotional gimmick. What began as a publicity stunt, however, has become a favorite among Virgin Mobile users. The D.U.I. service was used 10,000 times over the past year, including 250 times by one customer in a single month. ("We think that man might have a problem," Parkin says.)

According to Virgin Mobile's (admittedly unscientific) research, the service's debut has coincided with a significant drop in the number of Australia's drunk-dialing incidents. An online survey released last month found that only 79 percent of respondents had made a slurring, confessional phone call in 2005, down from 95 percent in 2004.

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Do-It-Yourself Cartography

The most influential mashup this year wasn't a Beatles tune remixed with hip-hop lyrics. It was an online street map of Chicago overlaid with crime statistics. Chicagocrime.org, which was created by the journalist Adrian Holovaty, was one of the first Web sites to combine publicly available data from one site (in this case, the Chicago Police Department's online database) with a digital map supplied by another site (in this case, Google).

This summer, Google released software tools that make this sort of mashup simple to create, even for casual Web users. Thousands of people began to make useful, often elegant, annotated maps. It turns out that the best way to organize much of the information online is geographically. After Holovaty's crime statistics, real-estate listings and classified ads were among the first forms of information combined with maps. Then came sporting events, movies and gas stations with low prices. Now the social possibilities are being mined, with sites like mapchatter.com, which lets you search for chat partners by locale, and

Dialing Under the Influence

The truest words are spoken not in jest but rather after one too many bourbon sours. Liquid courage can turn a normally taciturn individual into a confrontational blabbermouth, eager to tell co-workers or former lovers exactly how he feels about them. The results aren't usually pretty, as has now been immortalized in the popular culture: Paul Gia-



DO-IT-YOURSELF CARTOGRAPHY

matti's wine-addled character succumbs to a bout of "drinking and dialing" in the movie "Sideways."

Baring one's soul while soused, unfortunately, is easier than ever, because of the proliferation of mobile phones. A BlackBerry's primary function may be to keep you apprised of critical e-mail messages from work, but it is also handy — too handy — for ringing your fiancée at 4 a.m. and confessing what really happened at your bachelor party.

frappr.com, where you can map the physical locations of your online pals and share photos with them. The latest twist is "memory maps," in which you annotate a satellite photo of your hometown with your personal history. (A good example is the blogger Matthew Haughey's evocative project, "My Childhood, Seen by Google Maps.")

As with many trends online, Google sits squarely at the center of this cartographic explosion, even though Yahoo! and Microsoft have made