

How Public is the Internet?

A Conversation on the Nature of Human Interactions On-line and the Implications for Research Methods

Alpha Selene DeLap
Director of Research Services

Phillip M. Edwards
Doctoral Candidate

Robert Mason
Associate Dean for Research

The Information School of the University of Washington

{adelap, pme2, rmmason}@u.washington.edu

iConference 2008; 02.28.2008, Los Angeles, CA



Session Objectives

Today: share multiple perspectives from attendees' research areas and institutions

“Tomorrow”: return for an extended conversation around these issues with multiple constituencies on campus

Synthesis of discussion themes as a white paper/journal article

Implicit Assumptions

- 1) I-School researchers are well-positioned to be active participants in both scholarly and institutional conversations regarding the risks and benefits to which participants in online research studies might be subject.
- 2) Ethical behaviors interact across multiple levels:
 - Individual responsibilities
 - Social constructions, and
 - Regulated activities

Ethical Behaviors as Individual Responsibilities

- Recommendations for practice
 - Megan A. Moreno, Norman C. Fost, and Dimitri A. Christakis, “Research Ethics in the MySpace Era,” *Pediatrics* 121, no. 1 (2008): 157-161.
- Empirical research on research ethics (ERORE)
 - Joan E. Sieber, “Empirical Research on Research Ethics,” *Ethics & Behavior* 14, no. 4 (2004): 397-412.
 - James M. Hudson and Amy Bruckman, “‘Go Away’: Participant Objections to Being Studied and the Ethics of Chatroom Research,” *The Information Society* 20 (2004): 127-139.
 - Connie K. Varnhagen, et al., “How Informed is Online Informed Consent?” *Ethics & Behavior* 15, no. 1 (2005): 37-48.
 - Batya Friedman, Peyina Lin, and Jessica K. Miller, “Informed Consent by Design,” in *Security and Usability: Designing Secure Systems that People Can Use*, ed. Lorrie Faith Cranor and Simson Garfinkel, pp. 495-520 (Beijing: O’Reilly, 2005).

Discuss (1 / 3)

Are there other practices or assurances that uniquely apply to online research methods?

Are there specific ways in which I-School researchers could integrate ERORE into their scholarship?

Ethical Behaviors as Social Constructions

*Ethical decision-making and Internet research:
Recommendations from the AoIR ethics
working committee, by Charles Ess and the
AoIR ethics working group (approved November
27, 2002)*

<http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf>

Discuss (2/3)

Are there other questions that we should ask of peers in this field regarding their research?

Are there ways of being more transparent in our responses to these questions in “public”?

Ethical Behaviors as Regulated Activities

Relationships with Institutional Review Boards

Nora Jacobson, Rebecca Gewurtz, and Emma Haydon, “Ethical Review of Interpretive Research: Problems and Solutions,” *IRB: Ethics & Human Research* 29, no. 5 (2007): 1-8.

(1) Change from within, (2) Education, (3) Separate review processes
Proposal: minimalist application, peer reflection, “ethics-as-process”

Explaining online systems and interactions using metaphors

- Diary?
- Telephone?
- Letter?
- 1-on-1 conversation (in a coffee shop, etc.)?
- Bulletin board?
- Newspaper?
- Public speech?

Discuss (3/3)

How can researchers collaborate with IRB staff to create more Internet research-friendly policies and procedures?

Are there other metaphors for online behaviors that are useful in advancing the discussion of ethical research practices?

How can social science researchers learn from humanistic and natural science researchers (specifically bio-medical researchers) to make their designs and protocols more ethical?

Continuing the Conversation...

HICSS-42 (2009) Minitrack / *Personal and Organizational Relationships in a Global Networked World: Emergent Ethical Challenges*

http://www.hicss.hawaii.edu/hicss_42/minitracks/os-por.htm

Co-Chairs:
Robert M. Mason
Richard O. Mason
Antonio Vaccaro

How Public is the Internet?

A Conversation on the Nature of Human Interactions On-line and the Implications for Research Methods

Alpha Selene DeLap
Director of Research Services

Phillip M. Edwards
Doctoral Candidate

Robert Mason
Associate Dean for Research

The Information School of the University of Washington

{adelap, pme2, rmmason}@u.washington.edu

iConference 2008; 02.28.2008, Los Angeles, CA

Thank you.
Questions?

