What Price Privacy in a Data-intensive World?

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Abstract

Much of the current dialogue about personal data is anchored in fear, uncertainty and doubt. There is a growing sense 'big brother is watching' and that individual rights are being ignored, along with important values such as transparency. Recurring themes in the literature are trust, respect, freedom, informed consent, self-determinism, control, ownership, sensitivity and the right 'to be left alone'. Individuals are also recognising data is an asset as organisations reap the benefits of linking disparate data to understand our preferences, tendencies and buying patterns. The growing conversation around privacy is largely the result of the technological capability that produces and harnesses data and its subsequent potential. At the same time, opinions about privacy issues are highly contextual. This event intends to stimulate thinking and activity around how information professionals can help shape the conversation and approaches to data, privacy and ethics. How do we address these issues in our organisations? Are there broader responsibilities to ensure educated citizens? We wish to bring together researchers and educators within the iSchool community interested in discussing the challenges associated with tackling privacy issues in data-intensive organizational context, using a participatory format to stimulate reflection and dialogue. The event builds towards a collaborative discussion of next steps of interest with a view to sharing outcomes and insights via an online community network.

Keywords: privacy, data, ethics, data-intensive, personal data ecosystem

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1 Overview

The US World Economic Forum's 2012 Industry Agenda paper stated "dialogue about personal data is currently anchored in fear, uncertainty and doubt", which is echoed in much of the literature around data privacy (e.g.: Best et al, 2006; Chen & Williams, 2007; Craig & Ludloff, 2011; Friedenwald et al, 2010; Haga & O'Daniel, 2011). There is a growing sense 'big brother is watching' and that individual rights are being ignored, along with important values such as transparency. Recurring themes in the literature are trust, respect, freedom, informed consent, self-determinism, control, ownership, sensitivity and the right 'to be left alone'. Individuals are also recognising data is an asset as organisations reap the benefits of linking disparate data to understand our preferences, tendencies and buying patterns. The growing conversation around privacy is largely the result of the growth of information technology with enhanced capacity for surveillance and storage and the "increased value of information in decision-making" (Mason, 1986). It is the technological capability that produces and harnesses data and its subsequent potential that creates concerns today. At the same time, opinions about privacy issues are highly contextual:

> We both believe that Google Maps makes our lives easier, the real issue is: what level of privacy are we willing to give up for that convenience? …privacy is never a simple discussion of right and wrong but a nuanced one that must balance opposing views to determine a course of action." (Craig & Ludloff, 2011 p15)

We cannot assume everyone will make the same trade-off between level of privacy and access to data.

There are many frameworks for organisations tackling privacy issues (Fleury-Lawson, 2010; Freeman & Peace, 2005; Mason, 1986; Stiles, 2012; Von Nyssen & Hotchkiss, 2013). The recommendations of the World Economic Forum provide a balanced and simple framework that any data-generating institution could pursue:

1. Engage in a structured, robust dialogue to restore trust in the personal data ecosystem.
2. Develop and agree to principles that encourage the trusted flow of personal data.
3. Establish new models of governance for collective action.

A necessary first step in this process is a clear map of the personal data ecosystem of all members of any community. As educational institutions, it is also important to understand and fulfil our responsibilities for educating students, staff and the general community about privacy issues. For example, as Campbell (2012) asks, what can we reasonably advise people to do? Do we have a role in ensuring our community is aware of the technical capabilities of tracking via mechanisms such as 'Cookies'? What is our role in ensuring access to information via digital data literacy?

As we seek to i) better understand our environments through collection, analysis and reuse of data, ii) develop strategies, policy and procedures based on analysis of this data, and iii) make decisions about resources and services to support individuals in our communities, privacy concerns and issues need to be tackled through open and transparent dialogue. This session is an attempt at such dialogue.

2 Purpose and Intended Audience

This event intends to stimulate thinking and activity around how information professionals can help shape the conversation and approaches to data, privacy and ethics. How do we address these issues in our organisations? Are there broader responsibilities to ensure educated citizens?

We wish to bring together researchers and educators within the iSchool community interested in discussing the challenges associated with tackling privacy issues in data-intensive organizational contexts to engage with strategic challenges of:

- educating our respective communities about their data privacy; and
- addressing the privacy of student and staff data.

We welcome anyone with responsibility in this area willing to actively participate in and contribute to the dialogue.

3 Proposed Activities

A participatory format will be used to stimulate reflection and dialogue:

Stage 1: Scene setting presentation (10 Minutes). Organizers share outcomes of conversations and research from their institution's efforts to proactively tackle these issues; offer a general overview of privacy laws internationally and benefits of research data sharing.

Stage 2: Data sharing (10 minutes). Participants work in pairs to share with one another responses to a series of questions about what data they collect, what data they think is collected about them, what does and does not concern them about what is collected, what price they are willing to pay for data.

Stage 3: Hypothetical play (25 Minutes). Proactive strategies about privacy and ethics must be future-oriented, so these hypothetical scenarios (based on a speculative fabulation technique from Anderson & Bawa) bring the unthinkable into representation to explore extremes of good intent, evil intent and the spectrum in-between.

Stage 4: Round table reflections (25 minutes). Participants work in small groups to articulate trends, issues and concerns arising out of responses to previous states to identify what we can do to remain on top of these issues.

Stage 5: Wrap up and Next steps (20 minutes). Collectively discuss next steps of interest. We anticipate creating an online community network and sharing outcomes and insights via an online resource, such as wiki or blog.

4 Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field

Robert Mason opened his 1986 article on this topic with a call to action:

> The question before us now is whether the kind of society being created is the one we want. It is a question that should especially concern those of us in the MIS community for we are in the forefront of creating this new society.

Nearly 30 years on, his concerns have even greater resonance — and relevance — for the iSchool community, whose own evolution is associated with explosive growth in digital information long surpassing what Mason described. As educators and advocates focussed on "understanding the role of information in human endeavors" (http://ischools.org/about/history/motivation/), data privacy and ethics are core concerns. The program format is deliberately designed to provoke thinking and contribute to meaningful dialogue needed within our organisations and our field.

Some might argue the ability to access personal data has already eliminated all walls. However, such access exists only for those in positions of power. How do we shift the balance to ensure that adequate walls exist to provide the right to choose what is known about one's private life and enable citizens to be adequately data literate to pursue their own interests?

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