



Homework 14: Privacy and The Society of the Web

Goal: The purpose of this exercise is to think carefully about privacy and information on the WWW.

In this assignment you are asked to write a brief (3-5 page) essay on a privacy, or other Web-information gathering topic that is presently controversial. That is, the topic needs to have two sides that you can explain, illustrate and challenge.

Example Topics

“When is it right to post surreptitiously gotten information?”

“ ‘Pirating’ music isn’t any different than borrowing a CD from someone.”

“Gathering personal information to target ads is harmless.”

“Canada has strong privacy laws; the US has weak ones: Who is Better Off?”

“The two sides to the argument ‘I have nothing to hide, so I don’t care about privacy.’”

Resources

Blown To Bits The .pdf is available at <http://www.bitsbook.com/excerpts/>

Definition of Privacy and its discussion in the lecture notes from the OECD.

Videos of Star Wars Kid, Numa, Numa Guy, Etc.

The Julian Assange Documentary: <http://stopwar.org.uk/content/view/2192/27/>

(It runs nearly an hour, but the most important information from the point of view of the essay is in the last half ... so please watch it all the way through.)

Expect to get information from the Web: blogs, essays, etc. and other resources.

Requirements

- Write your paper with a word processor.
- State the Topic at the start of your paper.
- Explain at least two sides (points of view) on the topic.
- Provide illustrations, as needed.
- Challenge the two positions – just because someone claims something doesn’t make it true. What do YOU think. [It doesn’t matter what you think, but how well you justify it.]
- **Cite all sources.**
- Where appropriate, give URLs to the supporting information.

Caution

It is very tempting when finding a nice argument online, say in someone’s blog, to grab it and paste it into your paper. These are extremely easy to detect ... and they violate UW’s academic responsibility standards. *So, please, express the idea in your own words.*

Really, please do it!

To Turn In. Write the essay using a Word processor, and turn it in to the class dropbox.