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### Privacy Policies

People are always looking to protect their privacy. There are many things that they don't want disclosed about themselves without express permission, and thus, laws are in place to protect the individual from infringements on his personal privacy. An individual should have the right to keep his personal information safe from others; he should also have the right to know that when information is provided to someone else, the information is going to be kept confidential. With the internet age, laws protecting personal privacy have had to be updated because information can be shared more readily, and is harder to keep safe from others. Web sites need to be sure that any information provided can be kept private.

People are sometimes required to provide personal information to an outside party, and, when this happens, they should be able to expect that their information is safe in the hands of that party. Some instances where a person's information needs to be given out are as follows: healthcare records, criminal justice investigations, financial transactions, biological traits, and residence records. A person has no need to supply personal information unless there is a specific purpose. The information provided should only be disclosed to other organizations or individuals if there is consent given by the individual.

A person also has the right to know that any records of the information that has been given are up-to-date and accurate. He should also have the capability to review those records to be sure that they are complete and correct. Any data that is kept on record should also be deleted when

no longer needed, so as to prevent others who are not permitted from being able to get a hold of the information (Walton 1).

In the United States, access to some private information is acceptable in many cases. Credit scores are available to financial institutions to determine loan amounts or to others for employment or housing reasons. There isn't an over-arching law that regulates the use of personal information. Some people view the right to free speech as a conflict to the right of privacy. They don't want to trust others with their information because they know those others have this right, and might use it in disclosing private information.

With advancing technology it is becoming more and more important to keep the individual's information private. In the Harvard Law Review, it mentions this need, ". . .of the necessity of some such protection, there can, it is believed, be no doubt. The press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and of decency. . . . The intensity and complexity of life, attendant upon advancing civilization, have rendered necessary some retreat from the world. . . so that solitude and privacy have become more essential to the individual; but modern enterprise and invention have, through invasions upon his privacy, subjected him to mental pain and distress, far greater than could be inflicted by mere bodily injury" (Warren 1). This was written over one hundred years ago, but it is truer than it ever has been today. The new technologies such as text messaging, instant messaging, etc. have made it possible to transmit information instantly, not only as text, but videos, pictures and more.

So, some questions arise from these new technologies. What constitutes a breach of privacy? How much should the government protect? How much of the weight to protect privacy should fall to the person who maintains a web site? The courts have taken a new approach to see if there is an invasion of privacy because of new technologies. To determine whether a person

has an “expectation of privacy:” evaluate the means by which the individual has attempted to protect his privacy, evaluate the security measures (such as surveillance or number of people around) in place, and determine whether the inception and scope of invasion of privacy is reasonable under the circumstances (Rich 1).

The legal system faces a serious challenge in having to react to new developments but still keeping the individual’s liberties and the needs of society in balance. Employer – employee, seller – buyer, doctor – patient: these are some relationships that need to continue to have their rights balanced. Because of new technology, many of these types of relationships are in danger of breaking the laws of privacy. Most technologies do not have statues or even common law to determine whether or not what has been done with them is legal. Courts then have to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the new technology has helped contribute to the invasion of privacy between the parties.

Privacy in web sites can be difficult to maintain. Many people have their own blog online somewhere. Although these are posted to the World Wide Web, some people still want to keep them hidden from people that they don’t want to see it. There are a few ways to help accomplish this. Using a pseudonym to keep your identity safe is a large part of it, but you can still be traceable without posting your name. There are ways to track what IP is accessing the data, and that can often be traced to you. There are ways to hide your IP address such as anonymous networks and routers. Password protecting your blog is a very good way to keep others from accessing information that you don’t want widespread. There are also ways to keep search engines from listing your site under their search results. Many people decide to do one or more of these in order to keep their personal information safe (“How to Blog. . .” 1).

The ability to check your banking accounts, transfer money, and track your checks online is

particularly convenient to many people. Doing any of these activities, however, requires that you transfer very sensitive information, and while you want the bank to be able to access that information, you don't want anyone else to be able to have it. Most banks that allow online transfers use passwords and encryption in order to keep your data safe. Some people have set up "phishing" sites that look like a real bank site, but are just there to get your information such as your PIN, passwords, or other sensitive information. Each bank has its own privacy policy, and it is up to the individual to determine whether the bank keeps the information safe enough for him ("Privacy and the Internet" 1).

Banking web sites aren't the only ones that have privacy policies. Online stores, networking sites, gaming sites, and even personal websites can all have their own privacy policies. It is important that if you want your information to be kept safe that you read through the policy, and, simply, if you don't agree with it, don't use the web site's services. The privacy policies are there to protect both the user and the person to whom the site belongs. No one wants to end up being sued over something in a web site, and thus, it is important that web sites include this privacy policy to keep everyone safe. It is their job, also, to keep information that is passed to them private.

Both the internet surfer and the person who is in charge of the upkeep of a web site have the responsibility to protect privacy. The user need not provide information that he thinks will end up in the wrong hands, and has the responsibility to be sure that the web site's privacy policy covers enough of what they want it to. The web site owner needs to be sure that the user's information is kept secure and that the rights and privileges are spelled out in the privacy policy. This will help ensure that everyone's privacy is in order and no data is spilled out that need not be.

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