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# Computer and Ethics

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# Activity

**Mark works for a government department working against alcoholism and drug abuse. The department maintains a**

**database of people with these problems. Mark's job is to track the success or failure of treatment programs. He**

**has to prepare a report indicating:**

- **Number of clients seen per month in each program**
- **Length of client treatment**
- **Criminal history of clients**
- **Distribution addresses**

**He gets this information from various databases located in different locations. To do this, he downloads information to his computer in his office, then copies the data to a portable hard drive and takes that home to finish his report there. However, he also leaves a copy of the information and the report on his PC at home**

**Is he wrong to move the data to his house and is he wrong to leave the data there when he is done with the report?**

**What policy should Mark's agency have concerning taking work home? Discuss.**

# What Is Privacy?

- Freedom from observation, intrusion, or attention of others
- Society's needs sometimes trump individual privacy
- Privacy rights are not absolute
- Balance needed
  - Individual rights
  - Society's need
- Privacy and "due process"

## **Privacy and Anonymity**

**One of the earliest computer ethics topics to arouse public interest was privacy. For example, in the mid-1960s the American government already had created large databases of information about private citizens (census data, tax records, military service records, welfare records, and so on).**

## **Privacy and Anonymity**

**In the US Congress, bills were introduced to assign a personal identification number to every citizen and then gather all the government's data about each citizen under the corresponding ID number. A public outcry about "big-brother government" caused Congress to scrap الغاء this plan and led the US President to appoint committees to recommend privacy legislation.**

# Privacy and Anonymity

**In the early 1970s, major computer privacy laws were passed in the USA. Ever since then, computer-threatened privacy has remained as a topic of public concern. The ease and efficiency with which computers and computer networks can be used to gather, store, search, compare, retrieve and share personal information make computer technology especially threatening to anyone who wishes to keep various kinds of "sensitive" information (e.g., medical records) out of the public domain or out of the hands of those who are perceived as potential threats**

## **Privacy and Anonymity**

**During the past decades, commercialization and rapid growth of the internet; the rise of the world-wide-web; increasing "user-friendliness" سهولة الاستخدام and processing power of computers; and decreasing costs of computer technology have led to new privacy issues, such as data-mining, data matching, recording of "click trails" on the web, and so on .**

## **Privacy and Anonymity**

**The variety of privacy-related issues generated by computer technology has led philosophers and other thinkers to re-examine the concept of privacy itself. Since the mid-1960s, for example, a number of scholars have elaborated a theory of privacy defined as "control over personal information". On the other hand, philosophers Moor and Tavani have argued that control of personal information is insufficient to establish or protect privacy, and "the concept of privacy itself is best defined in terms of restricted access, not control.**



## **Privacy and Anonymity**

**Questions مسائل of anonymity on the internet are sometimes discussed in the same context with questions of privacy and the internet, because anonymity can provide many of the same benefits as privacy. For example, if someone is using the internet to obtain medical or psychological counseling, or to discuss sensitive topics (for example, AIDS, abortion, political dissent), anonymity can afford protection similar to that of privacy**

# Privacy and Anonymity

**Similarly, both anonymity and privacy on the internet can be helpful in preserving human values such as security, mental health, self-fulfillment and peace of mind. Unfortunately, privacy and anonymity also can be exploited to facilitate unwanted and undesirable computer-aided activities in cyberspace, such as money laundering, drug trading, terrorism, or preying upon the vulnerable**

# Privacy and the Law

- **No constitutional right to privacy**
  - The word “privacy” is not in the Constitution
  - Congress has passed numerous laws
    - Not particularly effective
    - Issue is pace of change
- **Privacy is a function of culture**
- **Privacy means different things in different countries and regions**
  - Serious problem on global Internet

# Some U.S. privacy laws.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Intent</b>
<b>1970</b>	<b>Fair Credit Reporting Act</b>	<b>Limits the distribution of credit reports to those who need to know.</b>
<b>1974</b>	<b>Privacy Act</b>	<b>Establishes the right to be informed about personal information on government databases.</b>
<b>1978</b>	<b>Right to Financial Privacy Act</b>	<b>Prohibits the federal government from examining personal financial accounts without due cause.</b>
<b>1986</b>	<b>Electronic Communications Privacy Act</b>	<b>Prohibits the federal government from monitoring personal e-mail without a subpoena.</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>Video Privacy Protection Act</b>	<b>Prohibits disclosing video rental records without customer consent or a court order.</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>Patriot Act</b>	<b>Streamlines federal surveillance guidelines to simplify tracking possible terrorists.</b>

# Privacy and Anonymity

**Other relevant online privacy issues that may occur include:**

- 1. Personal information on public computers. When students or staff use publicly accessible computers, they may unknowingly leave personal information behind, such as cached web pages (accessed web pages that are left in temporary storage on the disk drive and may remain there even after a browser is closed) and cookies ملفات تعريف الارتباط (small files that are put on a hard disk by a web site to identify users and their preferences), that are then available for inspection by others.**

# Privacy and Anonymity

Other relevant online privacy issues that may occur include:

**2- File sharing.** Student or faculty computers may contain software that makes files on them accessible to other users on the campus network and outside without knowledge of the owner, or may allow files to be stored on a central server that are then accessible to others without their permission . This could allow strangers to read these files that may contain personal information.

# Privacy and Anonymity

Other relevant online privacy issues that may occur include:

**3. Publicly accessible databases.** Many universities have databases that have public access, for example databases that contain directories for students and staff. These databases may contain privacy-sensitive information for which students and staff have given no permission.

## **Privacy and Anonymity**

**Other relevant online privacy issues that may occur include:**

**4. University web pages and bulletin boards. Web pages maintained by the university, by faculty or by students may contain personal information that invade the privacy of others. Likewise, postings and repostings (forwarded messages) on bulletin boards or in other electronic forums may contain personal information of third parties for which no authorization has been given.**



# Privacy and Anonymity

Other relevant online privacy issues that may occur include:

5. Search engines. Search engines can be used to collect personal information about students or staff. Specifically, a university's own search engine may be used to collect personal information that is found on the university's intranet or campus network. If such a search engine has access to many sites, it may give a detailed profile of people. It may tell about a student, for example, what courses (s)he is enrolled in, what student groups (s)he is a member of, and what campus events (s)he has participated in.

# Privacy and Anonymity

Other relevant online privacy issues that may occur include:

**6. Third party market research.** Students constitute an interesting population for some marketers and market researchers, and they may try to enlist educators to help them acquire information on students, or solicit directly to students.

**Clearly, then, universities will need privacy policies to protect the privacy rights of students and staff and to create secure learning environments in which members of the community interact with each other on a basis of trust.**

**Based on the previous discussion, I suggest that universities should consider developing policies regarding the use of information technology that include some or all of the following:**

- **Policies concerning digital plagiarism and academic dishonesty in online assessment.**
- **Policies concerning copyright and software theft.**
- **Policies concerning hacking. These should be supplemented by clear access guidelines to different systems Policies concerning the proper use of computer resources of the university.**
- **Policies concerning online anonymity, hate speech, which should at the same time, not impose unacceptable limits on free speech.**
- **Privacy policies for personal information stored in databases and for online privacy.**

# **PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY**

**Just as you would in the real world, be aware of risks, fraud and false information which exists on the Internet. Use common sense when deciding whether information is valid . Don't trust or spread further any information about which you are in doubt. Always try to obtain reliable information.**

**Protect your personal information to keep someone from using it in an unethical way. (For example, when you enter a prize contest, your name, address, and phone number may be given to a dealer of personal information.)**



Thank  
you!!