Evan Wilcox

Professor Patrick Gamez

Philosophy 3225

9/5/2019

Ethics in Software Engineering

One field of software engineering that I am particularly interested in is personal data collection. Now a days it’s almost impossible to use the internet without having to accept a user agreement or seeing a notice about enabling cookies for a website. The amount of data that large corporations like Google and Facebook collect from you while you use the internet, sometimes without your permission, is massive. These companies profit off this data by selling it to ad companies in order to serve you targeted ads while you use the internet. Occasionally this will end in a data breach and users usernames, emails, and passwords will be leaked to the public. Do you have a right to the data that companies collect from you? Can companies collect data about you without your permission? What data are companies allowed to collect? Should companies be able to profit from personal information they collect about you? These are all questions that have been asked and get different answers depending on who you ask and what their moral views are on personal data rights. We can begin to try and answer these by starting with weather you have a right to your personal information online. Most would assume yes because in this modern world, something like you social security number or your email has a very direct link in identifying you online. If someone were to steal your email it would be the equivalent of them trying to impersonate you. While many of these decisions will be made by a higher power, such as the EU’s GDPR, some decisions will be on the software engineers actually implementing the data collection services. The engineers will have to use best practices in their design like not storing personal data that doesn’t need to be stored and using secure encryption for passwords and other sensitive data while still completing the task given to them by their managers or the customers of the software.