Safety and Privacy Concerns of Augmented Reality

Concerns in the United States and other countries today often relate to safety and privacy. Augmented reality, while giving a boost to the technology industry, also causes some safety and privacy concerns in relation to multiple different fields. These issues include giving away user's location, data on the device, and more.

An example of an augmented reality app is Pokémon Go. The app utilizes the user's surrounding environment and inserts digital Pokémon which players can capture. The only way to find Pokémon is to explore, so the players must walk around outside in order to be successful. According to the Chicago Tribune, there have been multiple incidents concerning robberies that were almost completely caused by Pokemon Go. Players were lured into alleys and places that were not easily visible and then were robbed at gunpoint by criminals waiting for them there. Criminals also waited after dark at places where players come to receive in-game items, called Pokestops, to rob users playing later at night.

Most augmented reality apps utilize the device’s camera. Upon being downloaded, they will request access to the device’s camera. When an app has this access, it can use it whenever it wants, provided the device is on. Malicious apps disguised as harmless could use the camera to take pictures of the user and their surroundings without them knowing, or have access previously taken photos. Also, hackers could use the app as a means of entry to potentially take those images. The malicious user receiving those photos could use them to determine where the users are, as well as determine the physical characteristics of the environment.

Depending on the amount of control that the system maker holds, different outcomes will result. If the user is unable to clear data and the maker has complete control over the data once it is submitted, then an issue is created.

Most of the concerns derived from augmented reality relate to or are the same as those with any kind of technology. For the most part, settings can be changed to protect safety when using technology, but problems will always be found.