

In your ideal world, what are the inalienable rights of a digital citizen?

I would want the rights of a digital citizen to closely reflect the rights that the citizen is entitled to in the physical world. To discuss this in the context of United States citizens, I wish I knew the constitution better. Instead I will speak from my personal perspective and opinion. Currently citizens enjoy a wide range of digital rights. We have the right to free speech online. We have the right to privacy unless we voluntarily give it up. We're seeing that this is more complicated online though. Our speech is policed and censored by the platforms we choose to speak on. Our privacy is often a commodity that we trade, often unknowingly, in order to use the same platforms. There's a level of dissociation involved in the digital space that allows us to compromise our rights and vice versa. I don't really know how to address this issue. Maybe increased accountability? What if our digital selves had a more reliable and centralized record or history, like a credit report. We could see what we participate in on the internet, what we say, how our information is used and distributed. But this kind of thing contains risks in and of itself. The internet is an inherently unsafe place. Much less safe than our own homes. That's another issue I don't know how to address.

In practicality, which of these do you think are most attainable?

Practically, I think some version of this "digital credit report" is attainable. What if every internet company that was publicly traded with a shareholder interest was required to register to a program that reports on what it does with user data. This would be a centralized repository so people could go to one place to monitor and track what is happening to their digital selves. They could file disputes if they see something incorrect or something that violates their rights. But this kind of system could easily be abused for the wrong reasons and even worse, hacked.

What is the single most important thing to teach K-12 students with respect to their privacy concerns?

The single most important thing in my mind I want to pass along to students is the permanence and locus of control of digital information. Once you put something on the internet, there is almost no guarantee that you will be able to control it anymore. It is so easy to copy and redistribute digital content. I have many stories that illustrate this point. Even though you post a slightly inappropriate picture on your instagram account, anybody is free to copy it and repost it to their own "fail blog" or other source. It can stay there for years and may be much more easily accessible than your original post. You may have a very hard time petitioning to get it removed or you may not be able to get it removed at all. Students need to understand that they do not own their own content once they publish it to the digital world, it belongs to the digital world.