Personal Data & Its Security Today

I acknowledge that the Capstone Project is an independent study project to be completed individually. On my honor, I have not received aid on my Capstone Project other than what was provided by my faculty mentor and any persons explicitly cited in my work. I further acknowledge that if I have given any aid to another student in this course, the instructor of this course was made aware of my contributions.

10/18/2015

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Objective of the Project

The objective of this project is to find out if many of the sites that most of society uses keeps your personal data even when you decide to no longer use their services and terminate your account. This refers to sites like Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, and dating sites like eHarmony. When you use these sites you have to make a user profile and put in personal data in order to identify yourself and for others to identify you. For example Facebook requires an email that you use in order to login in. That is private personal data in order for Facebook to recognize you and your account with them. Items such as photo's, Birthdays and posts is also personal data but this is public so people on Facebook would be able to recognize you from other people that maybe have the same name as you.

My objective is to be able to find out which sites decide to keep your personal data when you terminate your account and which will forget you and delete all user data that you have inputted. After reading the peer review and discussing it with my faculty mentor we have decided that this is a good topic for me to look into. Since I am specializing in cybersecurity and networking here at Marymount these goes hand in hand with cybersecurity and how people should really look into protecting themselves when using the internet and social media sites that on the web today. The person who has conducted my peer review has said that this is a feasible topic and an interesting one to look into. They believe that I will be able to complete this research within the time frame that is given in this semester. My faculty mentor who is Dr. Murphy has stated that this is also a good topic and should be able to be completed in the time frame given to me. Though she did make a comment about the depth of research I should do for specific sites and that I should also spread my research into sites that have already been

exploited like Ashley Madison and companies like Sony and a few of the government data

breaches that have happened over the recent years.

Point of View

Personal data has been around for as long as records of people have been kept. From

recent events of the website Ashley Madison I have become curious on what happens to

someone's information and data after they terminate an account with a certain site whether it

is Twitter, Facebook, or eHarmony. Does all their data become erased and forgotten or is it put

on the back burner? My hypothesis is that your personal data that you input into websites to

create a profile or an account is never truly deleted. Once you decide to terminate your account

your information is stored on a server that is not reachable from the outside. My argument for

this is simple. I believe that companies are keeping this information for their own statistics and

analysis. As some of these companies grow and become more popular they would like to see

what the majority of their users liked and disliked when the company tried something new for

the users. When they are about to unveil something new they may want to run analysis to see

how their users react when something new is brought to them. Also I believe the government

has a strong influence on social media sites on keeping a user's personal data even after they

have terminated an account for whatever reason. The government has proven that they like to

be able to access people's personal data in order to prevent possible terrorist events from

happening and protecting the public. One way to help them be able to complete this mission is

that they may request to have access to a person's personal data. When Snowden released

documents on what the NSA does that he felt was meant for the public to know about one of

the documents explains how the NSA would request from social media sites peoples personal data.

Faculty Advisor

The faculty advisor that I have chosen to be my mentor through this project is Dr. Diane Murphy. Dr. Murphy is the head of Marymount's Information Technology Department. Her Academic credentials are B.Sc., University of Wales, UKM.Sc., Ph.D., and University of Sheffield, UK. As a professor Dr. Murphy focuses on many different aspects of information technology. Two of these aspects are cybersecurity, and privacy. Both of these aspects correlate to my thesis and objective of this project which is about people's personal data and how it gets exploited. Dr. Murphy has known me since my first semester as a freshman here at Marymount and has guided me through the rest of the years and this is why I chose her to be my faculty mentor for the capstone project.

Project Plan

My project plan has been to spend 6 hours a week on my research. The first initial step was to create an email account that I will use to create profiles with different sites. The lengthy part is deleting the account and giving it a few days for the servers to register that my profile I created has been deleted. During this time period I will be reading through the privacy and personal data statements. Also I will be reading into the term and agreements section all sites have and I will read through the termination agreement forms that usually comes with the process of terminating your account. My expected

completion of my research is the week before thanks giving break. This will give me the break to read through my research and formulate my findings into an essay. I have not planned on how long the final research paper will take to complete because there are always grey areas in lengthy hard dates. One thing that has proven difficult is being able to contact representatives from these companies to be able to talk about personal data and what happens to it. The reason being is because sites like Facebook to not have a number that I can reach them by but an email and the email is mainly used for complaints or suggestions and on the message boards people say it is a hit or miss with if they will respond to your question. These are the steps that I have in order to complete this research.

1. Topic – 1 week
2. Research – 9 weeks
3. Process Research – 1 week
4. Final Report – 2-3 weeks

Resources

I will not need any resources in order to complete this project that is out of the ordinary. I am not working with a client so I am not going to need to pull any special software that someone that is working with a client might need to.

Project Details

My capstone project is to create an email account that I will be using for research for my hypothesis on this project. My hypothesis was that your personal data that you input into websites to create a profile or an account is never truly deleted. Once you decide to terminate your account your information is stored on a server that is not reachable from the outside. So far I have created an email account on yahoo mail. The email is J_Smith1609@yahoo.com. With these account I have created a Facebook and Twitter account. I am planning on creating three more accounts later this week. I have spent a lot of time reading through some peer review articles about personal data and personal data breaches that have happened over the past few years to see why these places were attacked and why people's personal data have been exploited. With my personal Research I have finished with Facebook. Facebook has been very open with what happens with your personal data and what happens to your account. Facebook informs you that they will keep your personal data even when you terminate your account. They also do not hide from other people. When terminating my John Smith account with Facebook they informed that people that I made connections with on here (friended) will still be able to reach me and invite me to events and send me messages. These events and notifications would be sent to my email that is registered to the user account. Not only that, but if I so happened to decide to come back to Facebook whether it be a couple days or maybe a year or two later. Facebook will just reactivate my account just as if I never left the site. It's like when you put your computer on sleep mode all the applications you have on will still be there when you wake your computer up later.

facebook Sign Up

Your account has been deactivated
To reactivate your account, log in using your old login email and password. You will be able to use the site like you used to.

We hope you come back soon.

Facebook Login

Email or Phone: j_smith1609@yahoo.com

Password:

☐ Keep me logged in

Log In or Sign up for Facebook
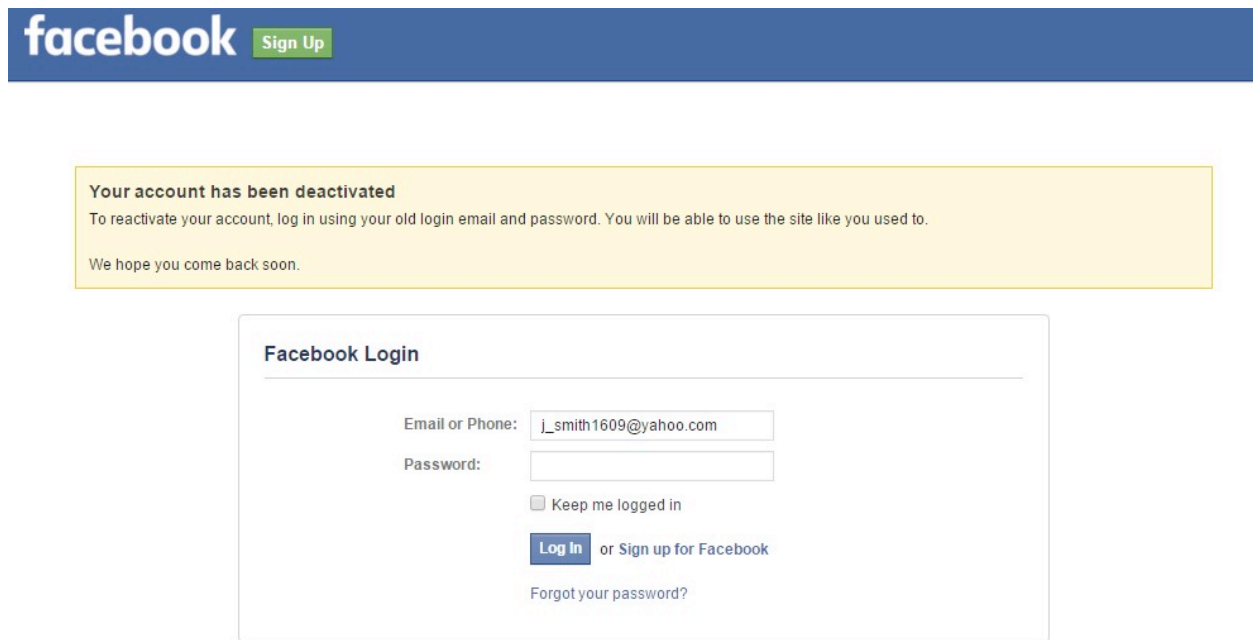
Forgot your password?

Fig – 1

In the figure above I have completed terminating my account and it send me right back to the log in screen. In the notification screen it says my account has been deactivated but I can login using my email and password and I'll be on like I used too. This notification also tells me that I do not have a time limit until it is all deleted.

What is left to do

What I still have left to do is to go through all my sources and pick out what will be strong arguments to my hypothesis. I also have to continue finishing making my accounts and terminating them and reading through all the agreements in order to see if they hint to what happens to my personal data. Facebook has done a great job at informing the user what will happen to their data and how it will be used. Once my research is done I will have to begin and complete my final draft and presentation. I believe I am a little behind on the creating user profiles but I have implemented time for this weekend to finish this part of the research.

Knowledge Being Applied

Courses that I have taken here at Marymount that has helped me with this research project are. Personal security in the digital age, this class taught me what your personal data is and how it may be exploited and how to protect yourself from outside threats. Corporate security is another class that taught me how companies will go and protect its data from outside and inside threats. I don't believe that I would need to learn anything new in order to complete this project I believe that Marymount has given me the skills over the past three years in order to successfully complete this project proficiently.

Risk Factors

The risk factors for my project are not severe and not many. Unlike for someone that is working with a client and has to do with working with other people, but some of the risk that I could face is if I lost all my research and was not able to restore it. For instance if my computer decided to die or crash and all my files became corrupted. Another risk that I face is if the sights I am doing m research went down for an extended amount of time. Even though this is not a likely risk it is still not out of the realm of impossible. Another risk factor is my personal health where if something happened and was no longer able to conduct researches for this project this would become a problem. These risks are unlikely to happen but like I said are not out of the realm of impossibility.

Work to be performed by others

I am doing all this research on my own. I have no intentions on building upon someone elses research or findings for this project. The only things I have are my sources to be able to support my arguments and thesis statements.

Works Cited

"Online Membership Risks Ended." M2 PresswireOct 05 2015. ProQuest. Web. 21 Oct. 2015.

Seal, Mark. "Sony's Hacking Saga over The Interview; Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg Speak Out." *Vanity Fair*. Vanity Fair, 1 Mar. 2015. Web. 21 Oct. 2015.

Weldon, David. "Ashley Madison Breach Shows Hackers May Be Getting Personal." *CIO*. 30 Sept.2015. Web. 21 Oct. 2015.

Green, Jeff. "Data Leakage Prevention." (2010). Print.

Howarth, Fran. "European Union Privacy Standards." (2014). Print.

Since I have not finished my research I still have some sources that I will be adding to the works cited page.