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LFI week 4  
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Write 3-5 talking points about what we discussed this week. Think of ways you could incorporate all or some of those points into instruction that would work at your library.

- 1) **There is no such thing as a free service:** Something is *always* being exchanged: the issue, then, is what someone is willing to give up in order to use the service. (This almost feels too obvious to include, but I also realize that we [LFI we] are much more aware of this than patrons, and also a fair number of colleagues.) This could be incorporated as part of a series of sessions about staying safe online, with one of them focusing entirely on social media and email (as the most commonly used free services), the compromises we make when we use them, and the steps we can take to do so in the safest and most informed way possible. The point here would be to educate and empower, not to scare people away from the services. I'd use myself as an example – giving examples of the services I use and talking about what I do to protect myself. This could also be worked into many service-specific programs that my and many other systems offer – for instance, Introduction to Email or Introduction to Google Docs classes could (and I'd argue *should*) include at least some information about what “free” really means, along with alternatives when applicable.
- 2) **Data profiling (a & b)**
  - a) **Data profiling = targeted advertising = racial/gender profiling:** This isn't exactly accurate since some profiling gets so specific/individualized, but in general it applies, since these are (some of) the broad-brush strokes advertisers use. I'd incorporate this as in: be aware that the ads you see online and the consumer offers you get by mail or email come out of data gleaned from your online and oftentimes offline behavior such as debit/credit card purchases or public records like home values. They are inherently limited, as they're based (possibly inaccurate) information about your race, income, gender etc., and as such it would be prudent to do your research into the details of the offer as well as what else is available.
  - b) **Addressing data profiling is a two step process:** first one must identify abuse or inaccuracies, and then challenge them. (This is from the Gangadharan article – I really appreciated how the author broke the steps apart.) Identification is often made extremely difficult by companies' opacity and oftentimes legally protected algorithms/methods (“trade secrets”, abetted by lack of regulation, and the US's general pro-corporate bent). Challenging them can be its own multi-step process too: one must have methods and know about those methods, and then oftentimes the methods require means that not everyone has - for instance, time, or internet access, or computer skills (for instance, the FTC directs people who want to file consumer complaints to an online [complaint assistant](#)). And challenging abuse/inaccuracies is hampered by ever-diminishing legal consumer protection.

I could see these two points incorporated into a session about consumer safety/protection online - while the issues aren't limited to the consumer realm, that is how many of them manifest.

- 3) **A society's inequities are replicated and reflected in its technology:** Gangadharan (Intro section, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph) captures this well with “[s]ocial prejudice can easily be grafted onto digital tools”, though I'd add *and existing inequities* next to “social prejudice” and argue that

some digital tools built that way purposefully, either out of malice or ignorance. This captures two key issues: 1) that technology is not neutral, either in its development or its application, and 2) that access isn't a panacea and comes with its own dangers. I'd target this more toward trainings for librarians and administrators since so much of our work involves increasing access. I think many (though by no means all) in the profession understand that oftentimes the issue is training/ability to use technology rather than mere access, but I rarely hear discussion about the harms that come with access. I think that intuitively many people would understand this – considering questions from patrons about, for instance, email scams or the number of times we see patrons relying on suspect sources online – but even that is different than focusing on harms, as April put it in “The Watchdogs That Didn't Bark,” to *communities*. We do a disservice to our patrons if we blindly promote tech access – generally or to specific services – without considering and providing information about the harms that come along with it.

Note: Our programs are scheduled further at least a month out and I haven't had the opportunity to discuss any of this individually with patrons or at a staff meeting (mainly because we haven't had one) in the interim. I did raise point #1 when we started loaning out Chromebooks but was told that the decision was already made and related documentation – including an agreement patrons must sign where we *could* have included information about staying safe(r) while using Google Docs – was not open for that type of revision. When patrons have asked about using the Chromebooks for word processing, I've sometimes mentioned Google's privacy issues, but usually the transaction is so brief that I'm not able to get into more detail and/or patrons don't ask for more info. I would like to do better here.

Also, our system is in the process of standardizing our tech classes' curriculum and I am going to request that we include at least basic information about safe browsing online and privacy issues with free email providers where applicable (mainly Introduction to Email and Introduction to the Internet). If those changes aren't incorporated, I have no problem adding in info about, for instance, privacy-focused alternatives to Gmail in the Introduction to Email class or DuckDuckGo in Introduction to the Internet classes that I teach, and suggesting that colleagues at my branch do the same.