

Data, Advertising, and You

Starting in October I will be doing monthly webinars on Internet privacy and security for our members. Some of the takeaways that I'll be using from Week 4's discussions and lecture are listed below.

- Apple, Amazon, Alphabet/Google, Microsoft, and Facebook make up the five most powerful companies in the world. These companies make a majority of their revenue from advertising (84% of Google's revenue is from advertising). Facebook's ad revenue has increased exponentially from year to year. According to Adweek, Facebook saw a 47% increase in advertising revenue from 2016 to 2017.¹ They are able to make so much money in ads because they are selling user data. Social media users are their products.
- A data spill cannot be cleaned up. Once a company's data is breached (or even freely given), it is out in the world. Be careful about what information you share on social media. Even if you've set your accounts to private, that information can still be shared with advertising and third-party companies.
- Cookies are used to track your online habits across sites, and that information is used to populate targeted ads on Facebook, Google, YouTube, Instagram, and more. For their part, Google tracks users across their platforms to target ads and content. The search engine DuckDuckGo does not track users' web browsing.
- Smart Appliances, such as Amazon Echo, Google Home, Roku, and Apple TV, keep track of your data and history. This information can be sold to advertisers by the companies, but also by Internet Service Providers. This information not only includes products users search for, but also music, movies, and TV shows they watch and listen to.

¹ <https://www.adweek.com/digital/facebook-raked-in-9-16-billion-in-ad-revenue-in-the-second-quarter-of-2017/>