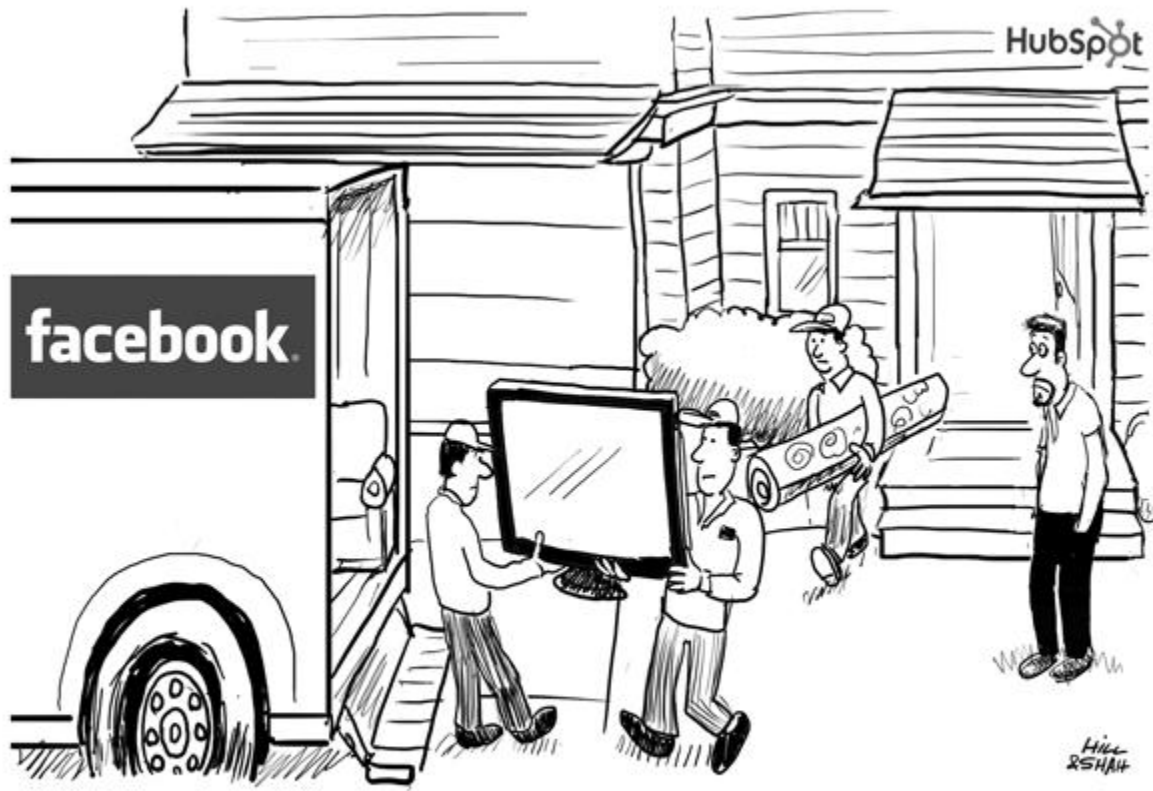


Exploring Privacy and Data Policies



JOE FAILED TO READ THE "WE CAN CONFISCATE YOUR FURNITURE AT ANY TIME" CLAUSE IN THE MOST RECENT UPDATE TO THE TERMS OF SERVICE.

["New Facebook Terms Allows Confiscating Furniture"](#) by [HubSpot](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

Privacy and Data Policies are something we have all “agreed” to put not often read all the way through let alone understood. While they seem like something meant to protect users and their privacy, what they actually do is protect the companies that create them and to facilitate an agreement to collect our data for their purposes. You may have noticed in the past couple of years that many Big Tech companies have revamped their privacy and data policies. They use simpler language, better navigation, fun graphics with talking points. These policies seem very comprehensible, and yet after reading their claims, what does any of it actually mean? While the language might seem clearer, the meaning is just as muddled. In this way, users have access to documents but not the “meaningful access” needed to make a truly informed decision. You would think digging into legal jargon and intentional ambiguity would be the last thing students would want to do, and yet, we find students very eager to identify the

vagueness of these policies. As an exercise in curiosity, many enjoy speculating on what the gray areas allow a company to do with data (what range the lack of specificity allows them to get away with). Even more so when we have students “translate” these policies for an audience of their choosing in a form of their choosing. What follows is a collection of content to help instructors introduce and explore privacy policies in the classroom. As with the previous newsletter, there is a popular source for introducing the topic to students, an academic source for theorizing the issue, and then an activity for students to try out in class.

Academic Article

Woods, Charles and Noah Wilson. “The Rhetorical Implications of Data Aggregation: Becoming a Dividual in a Data-Driven World.” *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy*, no. 19, <https://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/the-rhetorical-implications-of-data-aggregation-becoming-a-dividual-in-a-data-driven-world/>.

Woods and Wilson examine what “meaningful access” to privacy policies would actually look like. They argue that meaningful access on social media platforms requires an understanding of the data aggregation and digital profiling that powers them—encapsulated in the questions: How is data collected, processed, and used?. Through John Cheney-Lippold’s “measurable types,” Woods and Wilson think about how social media platform algorithms generate digital user profiles, and their article offers an assignment sequence for exploring privacy policies through remediation.

Popular Media

Zomorodi, Manoush, host. “The ‘Privacy Policy’ Policy.” *IRL Podcast* from Mozilla, 14 June 2019, <https://irlpodcast.org/season5/episode1/>.

In “The Privacy Policy Policy” Manoush Zomorodi unpacks what privacy policies actually do: that they are less about protecting your privacy and more about legally protecting the services that rely on your data, they are a legal document that “spells out how a company collects, stores, and uses that data.” Zomorodi talks to a range of people about this issue (each providing really great insight) and we were really struck by Lorrie Cranor’s ideas about “meaningful consent” or what she refers to as making clear “what is being collected, why it’s being collected, what it’s going to be used for.” A larger question the podcast raises is how exactly do we make privacy policies useful for users?

Assignment/Activity

[Privacy Policy Remediation Assignment by Charles Woods](#)

This issue's activity comes from the DRPC's own Charles Woods which puts into practice the assignment sequence theorized in the aforementioned academic article. Woods asks students to annotate privacy policies with specific consideration for data collection. They then create two memes demonstrating their thinking: one about their current relationship to digital privacy and the other their current understanding of their learning management system's privacy policy. While this specific assignment has students examine the privacy policies for their campus's learning management system, this inquiry can be easily adapted for a privacy policy from the social media platform of their choice.

Latest updates from the DRPC

Our time at the CCCC's 2023 conference was a busy one:

- Conference Presentation
Teaching and Learning About Privacy and Surveillance: Doing Hope Through the Digital Rhetorical Privacy Collective was presented by Morgan Banville, Charles Woods, and Gavin P. Johnson at CCCC in Chicago.
- ChatGPT Session
DRPC Advisory Board members Charles Woods and Gavin Johnson were invited by CCCC organizers to present as a part of a Special Session on ChatGPT called, "ChatGPT, Magical Thinking, and the Discourse of Crisis."
- Grant Win
Teaching and Learning About Privacy and Surveillance: Creating Coalitions Through the Digital Rhetorical Privacy Collective was funded by NCTE-CCCC

Look for our panel, "A Hybrid Resource for Teaching and Learning about Privacy and Surveillance: The Digital Rhetorical Privacy Collective" featuring Advisory Board members Cecilia Shelton, Charles Woods, Gavin Johnson, and Noah Wason at the upcoming Computers and Writing 2023 conference at University of California, Davis.