

Privacy Rights

In my ideal world, all digital citizens would have the right to be forgotten, the right to secure storage of their data, the right to decide what to do with one's own data, the right to access and be included in platforms where larger digital communities congregate, the right to a psychologically-safe digital environment, the right to truly-informed consent for any abrogation of the aforementioned rights. In practicality, none of these rights are truly rights without enforcement of them and meaningful consequences for the violation of them. In our current society, the right to be forgotten, in my opinion, might be one of the more salient, since those who are directly affected would also be acutely aware of it. At the same time, it would be truly difficult to erase and one of one's digital fingerprints, since any other member of the digital community could download it and reupload. That said, having the big tech companies on board with enforcing this right should cut down greatly on any unintended consequences of having undesirable information left on the internet. A recent example of how some societal pressure can lead to some changes is how Nicholas Kristoff's exposé on Pornhub's rampant hosting of videos of those who did not consent did lead to some systemic changes by the company. If that pressure came from legislation, the positive effects could be much broader. Only the other end of the spectrum, I think the right to truly-informed consent would be one of the hardest to attain, just from the impression I get that people are extremely quick to sacrifice their rights knowingly for the sake of convenience. I'm not sure how even well-intentioned companies could design agreements that we truly are consenting to.

For my middle school students, I am most concerned about their lack of awareness of the permanence of their digital footprint. The things they are posting on social media can haunt them for the rest of their lives, especially if we do not meaningfully attain the right to be forgotten. I want them to pause and think, in this social-media-driven generation, about potential future ramifications before they post.