

Digital Citizen's Rights

I believe that just as it has been determined in “real life”, as digital citizens we should have privacy rights. I specifically agreed with ACLU suit against Clearview AI, if law enforcement is not allowed in “real life” to get biometric information about us, e.g., DNA or fingerprints without our consent, why should an AI, any, be allowed to get facial biometric information which can be used to uniquely identify us?

If I could wave a wand, I would make it very easy for us to recognize in every app and every website, or anytime we are in a digital environment what data is being collected, where it is being saved, who owns it, who can access it and how easily can it be accessed and how long will it be kept where it is at. Ideally, I should own all my data, and I should be able to access it and delete it any time, from any saved location. Specifically, no information about me should be shared or made available, or used in any way, without my consent.

I remember once many years ago hearing an interview with a celebrity, someone commented that once a person is famous, they do not have a right to privacy. It was a bit convoluted for me to understand, I was very young, but it was something like, if you choose to be famous, you have agreed to give up your privacy. I found an interesting article here [Do Celebrities have a right to privacy?](#), but the law refers to the UK, and it came into force in 2000, which is much later than the interview I remember. At the time I thought, “I am glad I am not a celebrity”. What I think is that now, we, anyone who exists in the digital world, seems to be in the same situation, i.e., if you choose to post a picture and it is public, you lose your privacy rights. It is as if in the digital world we are all “digital celebrities”.

I think that my desire is not possible. I do not think we will ever have the level of privacy which comes from understanding what and how our data is collected, saved or used, or even less, owning all our data; for most of all it is too late. Our data is already out there and available. The best we can hope for is to create awareness and teach our students the risks, so they work on building a world where their children have digital privacy, with at least a good degree of control over their own data.

Our students can understand some of this, but my experience is that they are not aware of the dangers. AP CSP had a worksheet where students had to investigate an app they used, what data it collected and who could see it, did they have access to their own data? What could be dangerous about someone having this information about them? Many of my students recognized some danger which were reasonable from the data they had found was collected, but, to my surprise, when asked how comfortable they were with that (1-5 comfort with descriptions), hardly any chose 3 or less. At times they named the data, who could access it and the possible dangers and still chose 5 (very comfortable) because “It is OK for me”, because “I do not use it much”, etc. I remember being very surprised and feeling I had not shown them well enough the dangers of their data being accessed, especially because my students are from lower income families and minorities, for the most part. I know that teenager's Amygdala is not well developed, and consequences are not easy for them to grasp, but it still surprised me.

My sense is that things like Fawkes they may enjoy enough to try. It is visual, different and interesting, so even if they do not grasp the enormity of the danger for them, they may enjoy downloading it, playing with it and using it, I think the key here is to make it interesting, appealing, maybe exciting and different. Using Tor and NoScript may also hit home. Again, I think, presenting it as something interesting may move them to try it, instead of talking about “the dangers” who, at least in my case, being older, makes them think I am just out of touch. If I present it as a unique knowledge I am sharing and a different and exciting thing I think can get them to use it, because they refer to me as a “geek” and respect my knowledge and abilities in Computer Science. That is the way in which I think I can get them there.