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Privacy Rights

In my ideal world, the most inalienable rights of a digital citizen would be data privacy, and anonymity. These two fundamental components of a person's digital life are what drive most of the conversation about ethics in computer science today. Far too often, companies, websites, and third-parties do not treat people's data with the respect it deserves. In the physical world, people use things like a safe to lock up their passport and social security card. People lock their homes with deadbolts and guard their homes with state of the art security systems. However, in the digital world, we are often plagued by data breaches, spyware, targeted ads, digital fingerprinting, and tracking cookies. These things all invade our privacy and leave almost nothing safe from prying eyes. To be able to use the internet anonymously, knowing that your data would always be safe would be the most inalienable rights of a digital citizen.

In the real world, both privacy and anonymity are extremely challenging ideals to deliver on. When it comes to privacy, we end up relying on every single company that interfaces with our data in one way or another. We know that every company has found benefits to our personal data, and want to keep gathering more and more. It is highly unlikely that companies would stop collecting, using, and selling user data. Anonymity seems to be the more attainable ideal by default. Currently, there are technologies in place to help keep users anonymous when working online. Some examples of this are the Tor browser, VPNs and temporary credit cards. As people feel that more and more of their privacy is being taken advantage of, I believe even better ways to try and stay anonymous will be developed and introduced.

I believe the most important thing to teach K-12 students with respect to their privacy concerns is that they are almost never truly anonymous. It may seem as though nobody is watching, but there is *always* someone, or something watching. If students consider what they are sharing online as well as they would share if they were not online, I think many would proceed with far more caution. Students are being forced into joining educational platforms, but are almost never offered the opportunity to review what is being collected by these companies we are forcing them to be a part of. My hope is that the future will offer our students more clarity about the data they are relinquishing, and options to protect themselves if they choose not to participate in using a particular program.