

In my ideal world, everyone would have a right to digital privacy of their personal data. This would include biometric, health, location, and any personal information including birthday, home addresses, email addresses and phone numbers. This means that no government or business would have the right to such data without the individual's consent or a compelling government need. However, a person would have the right to waive these rights or surrender them in exchange for a good or service. For example, a person wants to find gas stations in the area to fill up his automatable tank. Such a person would give up his rights to the privacy of his location in exchange for the convenience of knowing the closest gas station with the cheapest price. In these situations, there would be a conscious surrender of personal information for a specific purpose. The current agreements are boilerplate and would need to be changed to be more understandable by everyone. Also, individuals would have more control over their browser, cookies and other information that the browser shares. I believe that passing a law requiring clear and understandable agreements is an achievable goal. I also believe that industry pressure will produce a "safe" browser that will by default turn on privacy controls.

The problem is more complicated where an individual consciously posts information online in many different forums, and a third party is able to cull such information from multiple sources and piece together private information about an individual. Specifically, an individual signs a privacy agreement with one company, which sells that information to a third party which is not traceable per se to an individual. Yet the third party, by combining data from multiple sources, is able to identify an individual's personal information without that individual's specific consent. I believe that it would be possible to build a legal framework to regulate such activity, and the momentum to regulate this activity is already growing.

I believe that the single most important thing to teach K-12 students regarding privacy is awareness of how their privacy is being compromised by their online activities. Students should be taught to understand the digital consequences of the software apps that they are using. I believe that understanding how their apps disseminate personal information would increase public demand for better privacy and would eventually encourage developers to include more privacy protections in new applications. All students should also be taught that nothing is free. Each website that they use, such as Facebook, Twitter, Google and others are obtaining valuable data in exchange for their "free" service. This will also help increase digital awareness and eventually lead to apps that protect privacy better.