

Inalienable rights in the constitution are “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.” Definition of the word ‘liberty’ is “the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views.” As digital citizens, do we always have the liberty? Target advertising, Siri always listening to us.... Sometimes it seems like it can even read our thoughts. If you're on the same wifi as your friend, what your friend's been putting in their Amazon shopping cart can suddenly show up on your phone as ads, because hey, you might like the same thing if you guys hang out.

Do we have the liberty to choose our own interest? Once you start watching one video, Youtube's algorithm keeps recommending videos that you may like, and all of a sudden, you are deep in the Youtube rabbit hole and 5 hours have passed by.

I believe, among other things, giving users the option of giving permission to collect data through cookies and fingerprinting should be mandatory as I learn more and more about CS ethics. I've always had a vague idea that all of my information is out there. But, I did not realize that ‘anonymized’ data still can be pretty identifiable. Metadata is still data and companies can use them to their advantage. And 2-3 sets of these databases can be combined to track that individual person down. Even using VPN, by simply tracking ad clicks, advertisers can figure out what you like and keep showing you similar products. Clearview AI article was even scarier. Clearview definitely went against social media companies' privacy policy.

Having the right to give permission to access your data? That's a given. Or is it? Is this practical? Attainable? A lot of us have experience when we're given those permission options, we get too lazy to thoroughly go over those as well as privacy data. With Advertising ID/IDFA (although it seems like with the new iOS update, IDFA is killed) and fingerprinting, it makes it so much harder to stop companies from target advertising and so many other things that invade our privacy. “Twitter, Google, Facebook and other tech companies have sent Clearview cease and desist letters, saying the tool violates their terms of service. Clearview has said it would address the tech companies' concerns, but also pushed back, saying there is a First Amendment right to public information” (Clearview AI article). So, is it attainable? I am not so sure.

Technology advances every second. Even if people come up with creative and smart tools such as Fawkes, advertisers will always come up with smarter ways to sell you stuff. Hackers will come up with smarter ways to access your information. We (not just students!) just have to be proactive in protecting our data. Taking a bit of time to read the privacy policy and go through the permission options when downloading data will give you some protection. Changing passwords regularly (and making them long!) will give you a little more protection. Nothing will ever be bulletproof but students definitely need to get into the habit of being proactive protectors of their data.