

The Privacy of Google and Coursera's Users

Both Google and Coursera explicitly state in their privacy documents that they collect and store personal data which are required for users to engage with their services.

Personal data in Google's case include names, date of birth, password, and pay information. They also collect, user created content, uploads, emails written and received, saved photos and videos, docs and spreadsheets created along with YouTube comments. Coursera, on the other hand, collects what it calls "personally identifiable information" which include: users names, contact details, IP addresses and identifiers.

Both companies collect information while users are engaged in using their services.

Google collects information through apps, browsers, and devices used to access Google's services. This information is used by Google to provide better services to users such as: automatic updates, location tracking information, and other unique identifiers. They also collect information on users from publicly available sources. Coursera, on the other hand, only collects information relating to the user's use of their site.

Google's claims that all users have control over the level of privacy personally desired to be comfortable while using one of Google's products. This can be done by browsing the web in a private mode, and controlling privacy settings. Like Google, Coursera, claims that users are allowed to withdraw consent regarding the use of their personal data for marketing purposes or Coursera's "legitimate interests" or the "legitimate interests" of one of its third-party users. However, withdrawal is likely to negatively impact the services received by a given user.

In sum, the personal information required to engage with the services offered by Google, and Coursera along with the data they collect while one uses their products can lead users to experience a sense of virtual nakedness. This is especially so when one considers that any user can be uniquely identified at least 87% of the time out of a population of about 300 million Americans by simply providing three pieces of personal information.