

## Data Privacy Assignment #1

With various scandals and abuses of data privacy ongoing, we are in need of proper regulation of the companies that benefit from personal data. On the other end, proper data hygiene practices ought to protect individuals from irresponsible practices from users of big data. The question is thus – to what extent can individuals control the use of their own data?

Technology, we hope, ought to be just as capable of protecting our privacy as it is of monitoring us. Web extensions can “show... all the tracking cookies” contained in a website and allows you to disable them (Hervey 2018). Adblockers can also shield you from some of the effects of data spying – even if a company knows what ad to send you to get your money, that can be a moot point if you never see the ad in the first place. Cloud storage can also be shielded from monitoring and snooping, using secure web servers like those Helm offers where data is securely encrypted and the hoster’s goal “is to know as little about [their] customers as possible” (Newman 2018).

Of course, that Helm server costs around \$499 to start and another \$99 per year to maintain, and disabling cookies on the internet does nothing to stop your cellphone provider from tracking you through your device or anyone from mining your posts and tweets to statistically predict your personality and private beliefs. Perhaps what “data privacy” entails, perhaps, is systematic isolation from common communication technologies and media, and use of expensive private services that do not rely on selling customer data to turn a profit. For most people, this is neither practical nor preferable.

It appears, then, that the modern world does not afford most people the opportunity to take control of their own data. Control of data is largely relegated to corporations who influence the flow of information through web technology, whereas individuals can only achieve a limited degree of autonomy through financial resources or technical knowledge.

## References

Newman, Lily Hay. (2018, October 17) This Startup Wants You to Control Your Own Data Again. Wired.

Hervey, A. (2018, January 24th) *9 Easy Steps to Take Control Over Your Digital Life*. Medium