**Sources**

**EFF**

press@eff.org

Hi,

I’m a reporter for the Star Tribune in Minneapolis looking to write a story about digital privacy.

My focus is on Google Maps location history and timeline features. I had heard of it before, but then actually looked into it on my own phone recently and discovered it was tracking nearly every single step for more than a year, over the course two devices. I downloaded this data in full from Google Takeout and I’ve mapped it in its entirety (attached).

This might not be super newsy for the tech literate, but to newspaper readers in Minneapolis, I think many in our audience would find this surprising.

I would love to get someone’s take on the ramifications of this super granulated level of data collection on the part of digital giants like Google and others. And perhaps some tips for actions people can take to control what and how much they share with digital platforms?

Any help is very greatly appreciated. My deadline is a couple weeks out.

Thanks!

**Jamie Lee Williams | EFF Staff Attorney**

**415-436-9333 x164 |** [**Jamie@eff.org**](mailto:Jamie@eff.org)

**Monday, March 26, 2018 @ 4pm**

So I’m publishing an aggregate map of a year of my life living and working in Minneapolis as captured by Google as a way of discussing digital privacy issues, especially now that those concerns are back in the headlines because of Facebook, Cambridge Analytica and all that. While services and features like these have been around for awhile, I think our readers might find the reminder of the extent to how we’re all being tracked every minute of the day useful and interesting.

**Where does the balance between convenience, innovation and privacy rest? How much of that rests on companies and how much rests on consumers?**

People aren’t really equipped to make that decision. EULAs aren’t written for consumers, they’re written for lawyers. It’s just the basic boilerplate they need to shield themselves from the FTC.

**Google, Facebook and other platforms have been allowing users to download all their data in recent years, which could be argued is a step in the direction of transparency, but it’s also gotten them in trouble as people learn the extent to what data has been collected. Do these tech giants need to go further to help consumers understand what they’re sharing?**

You shouldn’t have to do any of that. You shouldn’t be surprised when you open the data you download.

People can’t really comprehend what they’re giving to these companies.

**What would you say to the defeatists who are like “we’re all screwed, nothing we can do, might as well give up the fight for privacy?”**

If users demanded something different, there would be change.

Facebook is losing a lot of trust, people are kind of leaving. Demanding them to better.

“If we want to give up, then we’ve really lost it.”

Users should be more educated. “They know you want convenience and are taking advantage of that.”

Location data is so unique, it’s almost a biometric.

“Everywhere you go can reveal so much about your life and your patterns,” she said. “It’s some of the most sensitive information people are giving out.”

**Google Media Hotline**

+1.650.930.3555 or

press@google.com

Hi,

I’m a reporter for the Star Tribune newspaper in Minneapolis looking to write a story about digital privacy.

My focus is on Google Maps Timeline and Location History features. I had heard of it before, but then actually looked into it on my own phone. I downloaded this data from Google Takeout and I’ve mapped it in its entirety (sample attached). That represents about a year of my movements in Downtown Minneapolis.

This might not be super newsy for the tech literate, but newspaper readers in Minneapolis it may find it quite interesting.

I'm wondering the following things:

1.) What's the practical usefulness of Google Location History and Google Maps Timeline to Google and its users?

2.) Are there privacy concerns related to how granulated this data seems to be? (my location history had nearly 400,000 datapoints associated with it)

3.) I don't remember opting-in for this feature. Is it an opt-out sort of deal instead?

4.) Does the Google Location History/Google Maps Timeline service function primarily on the Android platform? Does it work differently on iPhones? (my personal research suggests Google Maps in iPhones tends to collect far fewer of these data points than Android-based phones, but that might be inaccurate)

5.) What else should Google's users know about these features, how the data is collected and used?

Any help is very greatly appreciated.

Thanks!

**UMN TLI**

Michelle Knoll

mknoll@umn.edu

Hi Michelle,

I’m a reporter for the Star Tribune looking to write a story about digital privacy.

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Any help is very greatly appreciated. My deadline is a couple weeks out.

Thanks!

**Mike Johnson | Technology Leadership Institute**

**763-442-3415 | mpj@umn.edu**

**Monday, March 26, 2018 @ 2pm**

So I’m publishing an aggregate map of a year of my life living and working in Minneapolis as captured by Google as a way of discussing digital privacy issues, especially now that those concerns are back in the headlines because of Facebook, Cambridge Analytica and all that. While services and features like these have been around for awhile, I think our readers might find the reminder of the extent to how we’re all being tracked every minute of the day useful and interesting.

**Where does the balance between convenience, innovation and privacy rest? How much of that rests on companies and how much rests on consumers?**

“The price for convenience, for cool functionality, is your privacy.” There’s a lot a people who don’t understand the “so what” around this.

“Data that once seemed innocuous or benign before can really impact a person.” Pretty much everyone accepts [Google map data] as default.“

Users have some control over what they share, so it’s a good idea to do your audit. Even if you think you’re careful or have things turned off, there might be other things still turned on.

There are so many ways these phones as amazingly powerful devices that can still track you even if you disable things like GPS.

“What is really protecting consumers in the US?”

**Google, Facebook and other platforms have been allowing users to download all their data in recent years, which could be argued is a step in the direction of transparency, but it’s also gotten them in trouble as people learn the extent to what data has been collected. Do these tech giants need to go further to help consumers understand what they’re sharing?**

Google is pushing the illusion that users are in charge.

**What would you say to the defeatists who are like “we’re all screwed, nothing we can do, might as well give up the fight for privacy?”**

“It feels overwhelming,” he said. “but if everyone just took a breath and step back and see something on the news and ask “what can I do?”

“You’re not going to lave your physical possessions unprotected,” he said, and that users need to take a breath before diving in headline and take stock of what they’re trading away or leaving unsecured when they using these services.

“The most important asset you have is your privacy and your identity.”

Ask why an app needs the access in the first place.

“Knowing what you’re doing as person, what you’re turning on and engaged.”

leads TLI master’s program at UMN

Director of graduate studies for the Master of Science in Security Technologies

**Notes**

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