

Assignment #5: Privacy
Comm 410 / Soci 409: New Media and Community Life
Prof. Keith Hampton

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Instructions

This assignment is an independent research project.

Internet companies routinely collect and retain personal information on Internet users. Companies like AOL and Google collect information on the browsing habits, search history, shopping patterns, and email use of their users. Other companies, such as Facebook and MySpace allow Internet users to create elaborate personal profiles and to create links to other users. Information collected, stored, used and lost by Internet companies can represent a threat to personal privacy.

Choose one of the following Internet companies: Facebook, MySpace, AOL, or Google. Based on publicly available information (i.e. what you can find on the Internet, academic publications, and media reports) and your own analysis, what if any privacy concerns do you have about the website/organization you selected? Possible research directions include identifying other websites and/or companies owned/operated by the same organization, identifying companies that finance or operate the website, and/or instances of how information revealed by users has been used by other people or organizations (e.g., information used by governments, colleges, hackers, individuals, etc).

Discuss your findings in a (750-1000 word) post to your course blog.