I Know Who You Are and I Saw What You Did: Social Networks and the Death of Privacy

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A leading specialist on social networks writes a shocking exposÉ of the widespread misuse of our personal online data and creates a Constitution for the web to protect us.

Social networks are the defining cultural movement of our time. Over a half a billion people are on Facebook alone. If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest nation in the world. But while that nation appears to be a comforting small town in which we can share photos of friends and quaint bits of trivia about our lives, it is actually a lawless battle zone—a frontier with all the hidden and unpredictable dangers of any previously unexplored place.

Social networks offer freedom. An ordinary individual can be a reporter, alerting the world to breaking news of a natural disaster or a political crisis. A layperson can be a scientist, participating in a crowd-sourced research project. Or an investigator, helping cops solve a crime.

But as we work and chat and date (and sometimes even have sex) over the web, traditional rights may be slipping away. Colleges and employers routinely reject applicants because of information found on social networks. Cops use photos from people's profiles to charge them with crimes—or argue for harsher sentences. Robbers use postings about vacations to figure out when to break into homes. At one school, officials used cameras on students' laptops to spy on them in their bedrooms.

The same power of information that can topple governments can also topple a person's career, marriage, or future. What Andrews proposes is a Constitution for the web, to extend our rights to this wild new frontier. This vitally important book will generate a storm of attention.

I Know Who You Are and I Saw What You Did: Social Networks and the Death of Privacy Details

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Amy says

This book is about more than Facebook. I'm really surprised about all the data aggregation stuff. There's no blocking, no opting out . . . you can't hire someone to remove things for you from the web, can't sue, can't get a bill through Congress. And, even just to mess with the aggregators' data, you can't pretend to be someone else b/c the they really do know who you are.

Part of me thinks, who cares, it's been happening for years, and maybe that's the trade-off for free access to sites. Worrying about how the data could be used somewhere down the line--that way lies paranoia.

But it's still troubling. Most of us never would agree to let companies record our every move in our homes or cars, not even for a price. Have we actually agreed to this on our computers, and now phones?

Farhana says

In the end , about the book I would like to quote Miranda warning in criminal cases: "You have the right to remain silent. Everything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law." :p

Okay that's a hell of thing with social networking!! This book has made me quite curious to dig into farther in this topic.

Maybe a little more thought is required when we assert our freedom of speech, freedom of expression. As of after reading the book , while writing this review I am quite wondering how this review of my goodreads account is going to affect my digital profile ~

[[23 September: I wrote the review yesterday & this morning when I logged into my fb account fb was offering me to see their privacy policy like thing at the top of my news feed . So I took a look at them. :p I wonder if this happened at random or has something to do with it :p]]

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

This book is written by an attorney, which places it in the dry and wordy category. However, the information is important enough that it's worth the slog. I scanned much of it that doesn't apply to me, and am gladder than ever that I never joined Facebook and don't share much personal info on the internet. BUT -- "they" can collect info from your most private communications online. Even your e-mails, which we all tend to think are sacrosanct.

VERDICT: Every internet user needs to read this book, regardless of whether or not they belong to a social networking site. Yes, it's very thorough, with lots of densely packed small print. But you can easily skip-read the stuff that doesn't apply to you. Meanwhile, for the luvva Gordy, show some restraint in what you post online! ANYWHERE online. Exhibitionism seems to be an unfortunate outgrowth of internet access. Not

only is it unseemly, it can come back to ruin your life. It can cost you your job, convict you of a crime you didn't commit, or make you lose custody of your child.

It really IS worse than you think.

Peter Mcloughlin says

A disturbing book with a general overview of your privacy online (you have none). This book is full of horror stories of people putting stuff online and it coming back to bite them. From cookies that trace every web search you make back to you. Having your credit rating destroyed by your online life, being denied a job because of your posts, to going to jail because of evidence online. This book puts a light on to something everyone who uses the internet would rather not think about. It makes for troubling reading. People who post things a lot getting tracked is just the beginning everything you look at on the web every site you visit is tracked and with the recent Snowden disclosures everything you do online may be (and probably is) under government surveillance. This book paints a picture of a surveillance society that sounds like something out of a Gibson or worse yet an Orwell novel. An important read but not a happy one.

Tiffany Davis says

And yes, I get the irony of posting this on a social network.

Heather Wehrenberg says

This book is an educational tool for everyone that thinks what you post on the internet is safe. If you use the internet for Facebook to post pictures of your life, Google to do searches on information you need, a blog that you like to read or add commentary to, then this book is for you. That means that all of us could read this book to be informed on how anonymity is not anonymity and everything you look at and everything you post is for anyone to see and/or find.

Lori Andrews wrote this book to educate everyone that uses the internet in any way. She's letting us know that while we may believe what we put on the internet is private, it is actually not. Facebook has proven to us that they can change our privacy settings at any time. This means everything we all have put on Facebook and we thought it was private, is not. Nothing is private, the privacy rules for social media have gotten longer and longer, more tedious to the point where it's pretty much stating that no one has privacy.

This book explains what data aggregators are, which was helpful in my case. The information that is provided to them are sold to other companies. That means every click you make on every website you go to is sent to data aggregators who will sell to the other businesses as I stated. So, if you click on a pair of headphones you want to purchase and all of a sudden you start to see those headphones in your newsfeed on Facebook, now you know why. The cookies on all the website collect your clicks and your information and distribute (sell) it. Have you tried going to a website and not accepting the cookies from that website? The website won't let you in, it's forcing you to use their cookies so they can get information on you.

What I like about this book is the author, who's also a lawyer, wrote this book and gave true accounts of what has happened to people who've posted items onto their social media and the repercussions that have come with those postings. This shows that this book was well-researched with the facts she gave for each story/example she provided.

Lastly, I enjoyed reading this book even though it was written in 2011, the privacy of our information is still an issue today. This book highlights the issues that American has with privacy and it's clear that our laws need to change to be stricter on privacy laws. Europe already has this figured out, so it's time we (U.S.) get there as well.

William Lawrence says

Frightening cases and examples. Great ideas for an internet constitution.

Kristy says

It's the end of 2017 and this one was written in 2011... Some of the details are old news but damn if it isn't still scary AF. The FCC repealed Net Neutrality rules two days ago, making some of the warnings and predictions from this book suddenly very real.

Dea says

This book felt a lot like a senior project expanded to the size of a book. From the wishy-washy handful of examples to the repeated insistence on a social network constitution.

I am used to these types of books following essentially the same formula: introduction of a problem, examples of the problem, explanation of how those problematic examples would be fixed by the proposed solution. This book had the first two sections pretty well covered, but the solution never really materialized. There was a lot of "we would have to figure out X" as if that is just some minor aspect of the problem and not the core of the problem. And a lot of the examples pointed out how the proposed solution would actually make the situation worse, rather than fix it.

I think if I had read a handful of articles on the topic of internet surveillance and how it can impact the real world, I would have felt less like my time was wasted.

Gosunflowers says

skimmed the book, but basically am convinced that there is no such thing as privacy any more (cue sad and dooming music now).

Judith says

I Know Who You Are and I Saw What You Did: Social Media and the Death of Privacy by Lori Andrews will tell you who many social media users are and what many of them did, particularly when Facebook removed privacy controls causing posts intended to be shared with friends to be seen by "friends of friends,"

and personal descriptions to be seen by "liked" products and services. As Andrews points out, even members who are willing to work at maintaining their own privacy controls are discouraged by the 45,000-word Facebook policy statement. Andrews has assembled a fascinating collection of anecdotes on social media woes from commercial sales of personal information to introduction of social media posts as evidence in divorce courts. Her proposed solution, a global "Social Media Constitution" seems a bit naive, however, and more information on privacy safeguards used in European countries would have been a welcome addition.

Aubrey says

If you use the internet then this book is a must read. If you are a member of Facebook then this is an absolute must read. If you still won't read it then maybe my review will give you a glimpse of what you should know.

The truth can be scary and most people rather treat the truth as "out of sight out of mind" and not take the time to be informed. But this book proves the repercussions of such a thought process. This book is also the epitome of why I deleted my Facebook account some time back and why I'm wondering if my coming back on was a wise choice. It is also why I came back with a new approach and don't share as many photos or personal status updates and why I leave that for Google+. It is why I spend more time on Google+ than Facebook, for they are VERY different regarding privacy.

Honestly this book could have been titled Facebook and the Death of Privacy and for just cause. It addresses privacy in all senses of the word, with mentioning of MySpace, Spokeo, Twitter, and numerous photo sharing websites, such as Photobucket. Google is mentioned briefly for its issues with Google Buzz but when Google+ is mentioned in the book it is mentioned for it's stellar, explicit and user friendly privacy settings and abilities. In fact there is a current movement from Google+ users to get people to delete their Facebook accounts in order to protect their privacy more.

Privacy is not just about the settings, but that is certainly where it begins. This book gave an excellent display of Facebook's privacy policies over the years, as it went on, and how the users' privacy faded, the privacy policies got longer, got more difficult to understand and now users have to go to more than one place to "control" their privacy settings. Heck even Zuckerberg had to read the privacy policy aloud at one point and had trouble interpreting certain parts.

It is about instances when Facebook blatantly shows how little they care about user's privacy. Such as when Facebook changed all settings a while back to public and every Facebook user had to go in and edit the settings again. Many of the cases in this book were involving that decision because people's information was made public which caused many problems.

But it goes beyond privacy settings. Because you can have your profile set to "private" and it doesn't really mean jack squat because your information is being sold left and right. It's being sold to marketers for the ads that you see on the side tailored to you. It's being sold to places like Spokeo, who then go and compile information about you and sell it to businesses who make decisions on whether to hire you.

Yet people are so trusting of the websites. One thing I never understood was this new trend of posting where you are and checking in to places. I used to tell people that telling people where you are is also telling them that you are not home, which invites robbers to loot your house. Well low and behold I was not wrong, as I got to a part in the book that talks about a string of 50 robberies that occurred because the robber read those check in statuses or just statuses saying that you are "at the movies." And what people don't know is that it

doesn't matter if your setting is private or public because for a certain amount of money it can be in the hands of anyone. And how do they get your address. Even I can look up someones address. It need not matter if it's on your Facebook page or not. So I'd seriously consider posting where you are. Plus, why? Why this urgent need to post where you are in that moment.

I also learned how even the little things, that seem harmless, can fall into harms hands. Such as a regular old profile picture. I learned how little our constitution protects our rights and that there really does need to be a constitution that protects us in the current century.

I learned, yet again, how cruel people are with things like cyber bullying and cops who take pictures of teenager who was killed in a car accident and decapitated and sending a picture of her decapitated head to her parents and then creating a Facebook page of her with that image as her profile image. Then not receiving any form of punishment.

Oh and one thing that many people do, which is not protected, is complain about work. I don't know how many cases I read in this book about people who complain about their work (without naming where they work or who upset them) and it's coming back to bite them because it "gave the business a bad name." And this was applicable for private, public, government, and corporate jobs. I have friends who all they do is complain about work and they don't realize that their "freedom of speech" is not protected there and that they could lose their job.

Granted this book is not an "entertaining" non-fiction read but it is very legal and packed with cases and thus very informative. I think it should be read by many.

Michelle says

This book had very important and disturbing information. The writing was very dry, but so was the material. I went to most of the websites discussed in the book and it was very enlightening. My life is so boring, but yet it shows up. One site I went to has my information as "male - 100%" "married - 100% and making a lot more money than I actually do. There was so much incorrect information. I also went through the process of trying to "opt out" of some of these site and they do not make it easy. It's like a secret treasure hunt that ends in a dead end. Argh!!

Anyway, lots of good information.

Jena Anderson says

If you are looking for a book that is written in any form other than dry this is not the book for you. This book is written by Lori Andrews who is not only an author, but also a lawyer. She makes this book interesting with the various points she brings up, overall it is an easy read. I chose to read this book because I have always heard about how much of your privacy is destroyed by the things we post on Facebook and the various other websites. This book not only covers how our privacy is destroyed, but also about cyber bullying and much more.

Andrews' main purpose of this book is to show just how our personal information is becoming public. I think

all of us generally know that the information we post on Facebook is not as private as they may make it seem. This book reveals just how public all of our information is and how it could be held against you. There are various examples that are used on how it is held against you. Many crime cases are solved by evidence posted on Facebook, and other websites. Judges cannot be friends with lawyers and various other court members. They can, however, search on Facebook to find out information for the case at hand.

Andrews also brings up a site by the name of Spokeo which has a lot of what should be private information that is made public. She brings up many different sites such as this, but Spokeo is the one that really lite up my eyes. Spokeo provides more information publicly than should be legal. That is one of the things this book really makes you question is what should be legally public information, what should be able to be held against you, and is it right for us to allow this to go on.

This book covers more topics and situations than I can compile into this one book review, but I highly recommend this book. I think it is important for us all to beware of the behind the scene things that are going on. This book will really make you stop and think before posting your next status on Facebook, or the pictures from last night's party. Lori Andrews will make your vision more clear over these issues, but at the same time boggle your mind and make you want to stand up for your own rights.

Kannadin says

Anybody who has or has not used social networks should read this book in order to be more cautious about which kind of information, comments or photos they post on the Internet.

As a European citizen, I feel more protected from the kind of abusive collecting of data Americans are subjected to, yet I do feel the right to be forgotten is difficult to apply on the web even in the EU. I remember an instance when some years ago I used a bogus e-mail address to register on Facebook. More than 6 years after leaving the website, I used the same bogus address to create a new account, this time with another name... ALL of the former friends I had on my previous account were proposed to me to be friended even BEFORE I had entered any other information. It was so scary and disturbing that I completely erased this new account within the next 24 hours.

Increasingly, we're made to feel that without a Facebook account, it's difficult - even impossible - to have a social life. But is spending hours in front of a screen posting about your various states of mind, having a social life? Data collection is already a problem of magnificent proportion when you are just surfing on the web but the price to pay for the connectivity offered by social networks is, as far as I am concerned, too much for what it is.

I can do without, but for those of us who are Facebook/MySpace/Twitter addicted, the author advocates the creation of a Social Network Constitution. However bright this idea is, no doubt businesses are gonna fight tooth and nail to thwart any attempt to get one, so don't expect your rights to be protected in the near future.

The stakes are high and few of us are truly aware of the deep ramifications of using such services.
It is common knowledge that it's only once you've lost something that you realize how precious it was: privacy has on the whole already been lost, it's now time to reclaim it.