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Data Privacy Awareness is Important

by Chris Madeksho, UTHSC Information Security Team

Everyone should be aware of how their digital lives show a snapshot of their real ones, and how the things they do and share online can affect real life. It is always helpful to be reminded of the importance of protecting what you share online as a vital part of maintaining your personal privacy. Each year, January 28 is designated internationally as Data Privacy Day to bring awareness to the privacy of everyone's data.

People share so many bits and pieces of their personal information online that they sometimes fail to realize that they have already revealed more than makes us comfortable. How many times have you had to give or type out your whole name, middle or maiden name even, along with your home address and telephone numbers, schools, and information on past employment just so you can download a document that may or may not have the data you need? Chances are, too many. How many times did you rush to automatically click on the "Agree" or "I Accept" button on an End-User License Agreement (EULA) that you didn't even read or understand? Just

count how many apps there are on your mobile devices.

There are risks to being complacent about data privacy, especially for those who are too engrossed in the technology that they are willing to share anything about their lives to get instant digital gratification via social media or online games.

Cybercriminals violate consumer privacy because they can profit from it. Today, a global black market for stolen data exists across various countries. This data that can be sold online include phone numbers, email addresses and credentials, credit card numbers, online account usernames and passwords and other personal information.

To keep your data private, use the same principles that has been stressed to you repeatedly. Create strong passwords, check and update the privacy settings on your online accounts, and think wisely before posting. For more information, contact the Information Security team at 901-448-1579 or itsecurity@uthsc.edu.



Keeping Data Private
How private is your personal data?



*Cookies are more than just
a Girl Scout Fundraiser*

*Learn about internet cookies, their uses
and threats.*

Internet Cookies: Helpful or an Invasion of Privacy

by Kevin Watson and Chris Madeksho, UTHSC Information Security Team Members

Today, many web sites on the internet can use "cookies" to keep track of passwords and usernames and track the sites a particular user visits.

Cookies are small pieces of information in text format that are downloaded to your computer when you visit many Web sites. The cookie may come from the Web site itself or from the providers of the advertising banners or other graphics that make up a Web page. The next time someone visits that site, the code will read that file to "remember" him or her. These type of cookies are called **first-party cookies** and are considered not a security risk.

There are also cookies (**third-party cookies**) that are placed on a user's hard disk by a web site other than the

one the user is visiting. This includes a person's interests, Web browsing patterns, etc. This means that multiple sites can provide a user with more targeted content – often in the form of ads that show up in all of someone's web browsing. For example, a person shops for a specific item on Amazon. Next time they log into Facebook, the ads on the side of the page, or the "suggested posts" are about similar products that were found on the other site. These cookies are potentially a security risk.

Some cookie, called **tracking cookies**, track data from multiple sites. If enough data is captured, then a detailed profile of a person can be created and distributed or shared with others, such as advertising

companies that want a targeted audience. These cookies are considered a threat to your privacy and probably should be deleted or blocked. Web browsers have ways for users to block these cookies, found under the Settings options in the browser.

Overall, cookies can be helpful in pinpointing areas of interest or shopping. However, individuals should realize that their online presence is being tracked routinely. Awareness of the issue can lead to controlling what information is shared. For more information, contact the Information Security team at 901-448-1579 or itsecurity@uthsc.edu.

