

In This Issue

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This issue of the Journal of Privacy and Confidentiality focuses on privacy in commercial and public data. Issues regarding the privacy of data collected online and from mobile devices appear in the news almost daily. As Facebook has grown to encompass almost 600 million users, its privacy settings and policies have come under considerable scrutiny. For an excellent graphical characterization of Facebook privacy we refer our readers to <http://www.mattmckeeon.com/facebook-privacy/>. Similarly, revelations regarding how Apple iPhones and Google Android phones have kept logs of users' precise location information have raised major concerns about privacy of individual information.

The three technical articles in this issue focus on different aspects of privacy in online databases and its lack of protection. Toubiana and Nissenbaum describe and analyze Google's search logs and the potential they have for compromising user privacy with respect to their search histories. Korolova studies the advertising system used by Facebook and describes several novel attacks that are used to exploit the system in order to obtain private user information. Both of these studies raise issues that go beyond the specifics of their individual investigations and remain pertinent to national discussions in the U.S. and similar discussions in the European Community on the need for policies to protect consumer privacy in light of the rapidly changing online world. We anticipate publishing further technical evaluations of online privacy in coming issues.

There are a growing number of government-sponsored and other web sites that catalogue and provide access to public datasets. In the U.S. we have data.gov ("An Official Web Site of the United States Government", sponsored by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget) as well as Google's Public Data Explorer, with ever-growing amounts of individual-level and establishment data with differing levels of privacy protection. In the United Kingdom, there is data.gov.uk and in his article, Simpson describes privacy issues raised in the context of a class project exploring this website.

The past six months have seen the release of several larger studies of commercial and consumer data privacy issues. In this issue we reproduce two U.S. government reports on the topic, one prepared by the staff of the Federal Trade Commission and a second prepared by the Department of Commerce Internet Task Force, both of which were originally published in December 2010. These reports have been publicly posted and the FTC in particular has received voluminous responses to its draft report; these are posted at <http://www.ftc.gov/os/comments/privacyreportframework/>. A revised version of this report is expected to be released later this year.

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