

COSC244 Tutorial 5

From Lecture 7 (Data Ethics)

1. Quiz question.
2. Get into groups of three or four, and discuss the tradeoffs between personal privacy and public health benefits for covid-tracking apps that are:
 - (a) **Voluntary** versus **obligatory**
 - (b) **Active** versus **passive**
 - (c) **Local** (on-phone) versus **centralised**.

In each case, which do you think is a better option? Explain your answers to the tutor.

In the remainder of the tutorial, you will be investigating what data Facebook holds about its users. Stay in your groups for this.

3. Have a look at Facebook's Data (privacy) Policy.

<https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy>

- a) Under 'What kinds of information do we collect?':
 - i. Give an example of the 'metadata' that Facebook collects about its users. (And a definition of 'metadata'.)
 - ii. Give an example of information Facebook collects about you that is provided by 'other people'.
 - iii. How can Facebook infer information about your current location?
 - iv. Facebook collects information about you from its 'partner companies'. Explain how partner companies share information with Facebook. (You can refer to embedded 'like' buttons, or 'Facebook apps', or the 'Log in with Facebook' function.)
- b) Under 'How do we use this information?':
 - i. Give an example of how Facebook uses the information it has about you to 'personalise the product' it delivers to you.
 - ii. Give an example of how Facebook uses the information it has about you to personalise the ads you see.
- c) Under 'How is this information shared?':
 - i. In what circumstances can other Facebook users access your personal data?
 - ii. In what circumstances can Facebook partner companies access your personal data?
 - iii. What kinds of partner companies does Facebook share your data with?
- d) Under 'How can I manage or delete information about me?':

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- i. How does Facebook's policy on deletion of personal information differ from the policy enforced by the NZ Privacy Act? Does Facebook's policy in fact contravene the NZ Privacy Act?
4. Facebook tracks its users' activity in a huge range of domains, across many apps. To structure this data, it classes people and their interests into a large set of categories. We don't know the full set of categories, but the US public interest group ProPublica has created two databases that give some idea. You can download these at <https://www.propublica.org/datastore/dataset/facebook-ad-categories>. One is a set of 52,000 categories crowdsourced from Facebook users who have viewed the categories assigned to them. The other is a set of 29,000 categories provided by Facebook to advertisers. (That's a lot of categories!)
- a) Download the ProPublica datasets and have a trawl through. (You'll have to agree to their terms of use.) What's the weirdest category you can find? What's the creepiest category you can find?
 - b) If you're a Facebook user, access your own categories. (I think this involves Settings > Privacy Shortcuts > More Settings > Ads > Your Information > Review and Manage Your Categories.) Are you surprised by what you see? Has Facebook made any mistakes in the categories it has assigned to you?