

Privacy, Security... and Risk and Danger and Secrecy and Trust and Morality and Identity and Power: Understanding Collective Information Practices

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Abstract:

As everyday life is increasingly conducted online, and as the electronic world continues to move out into the physical, the privacy of information and action and the security of information systems are, increasingly, a focus of concern both for the research community and the public at large. Accordingly, privacy and security are active topics of investigation from a wide range of perspectives – institutional, legislative, technical, interactional and more. In this paper, we argue that we can understand privacy and security only by looking at the broader social and cultural contexts within which it is embedded. Privacy and security are difficult concepts to grapple with precisely because they are caught up in larger collective rhetorics and practices of risk, danger, secrecy, trust, morality, identity and more. When we try to separate these concepts, though, the results are incoherent. We argue for a move away from narrow views of privacy and security, and towards situated and collective information practices.