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In this issue, you'll learn how the commercial Internet works, what information is gathered about you by advertisers and marketers, and how to take a more active role as a gatekeeper of your own information online.

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Whether you're looking for in-depth policy sources, avenues for exploring the information that is gathered about you, tools for protecting it, or something that will simply help you understand what cookies do, this section is chock full of the information and resources that you need.

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"Googling" connotes the image of finding specific, stable information about a topic. In reality, the nature of information posted online is dependent on our relationship with producers and the purposes for which information is published. In this MediaLit Moment, your students will be able to discover the dynamism of the Internet as they conduct Google searches on themselves.

Theme: Online Privacy

Would you reveal your vacation plans to someone you've never met? Or how about your health concerns? Would you broadcast your pant size to people who are not even selling clothing? Probably not, but recent developments in the interactive advertising industry are making the online world look more like this scenario each day. Where Amazon or Netflix made suggestions to you based on past purchases from their individual sites, online advertising networks gain information about your shopping and browsing across the web. They don't operate the web sites you visit, but they install third-party cookie files on your computer when you visit any of the web sites on which their advertisements appear, and use them to track your web surfing habits across multiple sites served by their networks. The practice is called behavioral tracking.

Media literacy education is needed to help both children and adults understand the implications of the sea change that is taking place in our relationship with both advertisers and media producers. In our mass mediated past, the ears and eyeballs of audiences were brought to advertisers by companies producing news and entertainment programming. If we were to outline this relationship, it might look something like this:

Who	Receives	Provides
Audience	Program Content	Attention to advertisements "Eyeballs"
Media Producer	Revenue from Advertisers	Program Content to Audience Audience eyeballs to Advertiser
Advertiser	Audience eyeballs	Revenues to Media Producer

In the contemporary commercial landscape of the Internet, you may be getting more than you used to because you receive services and consume online content as well—but as a class, user-audiences often end up giving far more than they receive. Once a user visits a commercial site that has a partnership with an advertising network, every user keystroke potentially provides information about the user to the owners of the site, and to their advertising partners.

Commercial social media sites yield even greater rewards to service providers and online advertisers. In addition to usage data, they're able to collect user-generated content. Suppose that you're on Facebook, and that you post an event for a birthday party at a local restaurant. Facebook's advertising partners will be able to use relevant details from your post to "serve" you ads based on consumer interests they identify.

An outline of these relationships would look something like this:

Who	Receives	Provides
Audience	Use of social media service	Eyeballs to advertisements, Personal data, Usage data, User-Generated Content
Service Provider	Revenue from Advertisers	Service to Audience, To Advertisers: Audience eyeballs, Personal data, Usage data, User-Generated Content
Advertisers	Audience eyeballs, Personal data, Usage data, User-Generated Content	Revenues to Service Provider, Products/Services to buyers

From the perspective of social media service providers and their advertising partners, audience data and content is the gift that keeps on giving. But they won't remind you of this. They'll remind you of the content and services they provide. Audiences young and old will need media literacy education to become fully aware of the value of their data. With that awareness, they can finally mount targeted, effective campaigns for the services they wish to receive in return.

In this issue, we not only explore changing media relationships in a digital age, but a host of issues which fall under the aegis of electronic privacy. In our research article, we take you inside the interactive advertising industry and reveal the tracking and data mining practices which support it. In another article, we demonstrate how many schools have not adequately addressed the student privacy issues which inevitably surface as new media and communications technologies are deployed on campus. In the MediaLit Moment, students conduct a Google search on themselves and learn that they must play an active role online if they are to have a say in the way their information and content is used. Media literacy skills are key to understanding all these issues.

Research Highlights

Trading Your Privacy

When Netscape engineer Lou Montulli came up with the idea of the cookie file in 1994, the task before him was to create an online shopping cart whose contents didn't "disappear" each time users left one site and visited another (see Resources for WSJ interview with Montulli). Information was exchanged only between users and the web sites they visited. Third party cookies, by comparison, are a revolutionary development because the data captured is easily circulated to other parties. And circulate it does. Though the data stored on these cookies rarely includes personally identifiable information such as your e-mail address, it's valuable enough to other advertisers that data exchange companies have emerged to handle the trading of user data. Typically, data on a thousand users is traded for just under a dollar (Angwin, "The Web's New Gold Mine: Your Secrets," Wall Street Journal, July 30, 2010).

In addition, advertisers may also hire other firms for the purpose of data analysis. A few of these use sophisticated algorithms to predict your likely demographic profile and consumption habits. Your anonymity may nearly be stripped away if the data for analysis include especially useful pieces of information such as birthdate and zip code (Steel and Angwin, "On the Web's Cutting Edge, Anonymity in Name Only," Wall Street Journal, August 4, 2010).

One reason why behavioral tracking has become common practice is that Google and Microsoft have both changed their approach to advertising. In its initial stages, Internet Explorer 8 was designed to block third-party cookies unless users chose to accept them. Now users must activate the "InPrivate" function with **each** browsing session. Where Google once relied on sales of ads keyed to search terms, in 2009 Google introduced interest-based ads and an advertising exchange which allows advertisers to target online consumers in real time.

In February of last year, the FTC threatened to regulate the burgeoning online advertising industry, and was particularly critical of the way in which commercial sites buried information on how they collect and use data in increasingly lengthy and complex privacy policies. Draft legislation released by the House of Representatives in May of this year would require clear, concise statements about the collection of user information, and require commercial sites to advise users about any information collected offline as well.

Through the Interactive Advertising Bureau, the online advertising industry has responded by drafting a set of self-regulatory principles and offering a service for consumers to opt out of third-party tracking by member networks. Industry partners are currently developing a clickable icon to appear on all online advertisements which will direct users to a page explaining how the advertiser uses their web surfing history and demographic profile to serve them particular ads.

In the meanwhile, online companies have sprung up to satisfy consumer demand for better privacy. Some consumers have been paying for custom services such as those offered by ReputationDefender, which will monitor web and social network references to clients and their

children for up to \$14.95 a month. Others have turned to free services from companies such as Abine and Ghostery which track and remove third-party cookies, as well as more persistent tracking tools embedded in GIF image files and Adobe Flash Player files (See our Resources article for other similar services).

At CML, we believe that the national conversation on behavioral tracking should include more than a debate over how to encourage e-commerce while protecting the privacy of consumers. While these are important issues, it's also important to discuss the implications of the changing nature of the relationship between advertisers and online audiences. The Interactive Advertising Bureau and other industry proponents argue that advertising and behavioral tracking powers the engine of online commerce, generating the revenue that allows commercial sites to offer users free content and services. While there's truth in that argument, neither the IAB nor Congress, the FTC or privacy advocates seem to appreciate the significance of the financial bonanza that advertisers are reaping from audiences. If audiences are trading away their information and their content, what should they expect in return? All parties to the debate on privacy need to examine these issues if online consumers are to receive the benefits and protections they truly deserve.

As Student Privacy Is Compromised, Schools Take the Hot Seat

Privacy issues involving the use of new media and information technologies at schools have been producing no less sound and fury than the debate swirling around online tracking. When IT staff at the Lower Merion School District in Pennsylvania activated web cams on district laptops that had been reported as lost or stolen, they also activated the camera on a laptop borrowed by Blake Robbins, a student at Lower Merion High School who maintains that he had never reported it as missing or stolen. Robbins' family filed a civil suit alleging that the district photographed him 400 times in a 15-day period last fall, at times in various states of undress (Dale, "No Charges in School Laptop-Spying Case," Associated Press, August 17, 2010).

In another example, "How Google Saved a School," a short video by PBS Frontline released in June 2009, has also been garnering controversy over privacy issues. New York City Intermediate School 339, a low-performing Bronx school which the city had threatened to shut down, had invested in technology tools to re-capture student interest and re-invigorate its curricula. Cory Doctorow, a blogger at BoingBoing.net, was amazed to find that the Frontline interviewer asked no questions about student privacy as Vice Principal Dan Ackerman remotely monitored student laptops in real time for inappropriate use.

The original video may be found at:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/learning/schools/how-google-saved-a-school.html>

The blog post is available at <http://boingboing.net/2010/02/25/school-administrator.html>

As individual cases of surveillance capture media attention, more systemic issues involving

student privacy are also coming to light. In October 2009, the Fordham University Center on Law and Information Policy released a study on state student data systems. These systems have grown significantly under both the Bush and Obama administrations, which have encouraged states to maintain longitudinal data on students to help evaluate instructional initiatives at schools and to help raise college entrance rates.

The report finds that most states collected information in excess of what was needed for the reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, and that schools were generally collecting more than they needed to evaluate their own progress. Typically, data included directory, demographic, disciplinary, academic, health and family information. Some of the data collected were very sensitive; among these were social security numbers, information on mental health and illness, and records of pregnancies and jail sentences. In addition, the majority of records were not anonymous, and databases generally had weak privacy protections, given the nature of the information collected.

Access this report at: <http://law.fordham.edu/center-on-law-and-information-policy/14769.htm>

At CML, we have argued for some time that acceptable use policies for school information technology systems are rarely written or explained in a manner which helps students and their families readily grasp their intent. Given recent developments, districts themselves need to clearly articulate their own intentions regarding the acceptable use of these technologies. In other words, districts need to treat their technology policies as living documents. We believe that one of the best ways they can do so is to attach them to an introductory course on topics including media literacy, digital literacy and digital ethics.

In its concluding lines, the Associated Press report on the Lower Merion case notes that the district technology coordinator involved in the laptop recovery program had been asking the district to establish an information technology privacy policy. As CML President and CEO Tessa Jolls remarks, “Too many opportunities for students, schools and families to discuss the responsible use of new media and information technologies are being missed. States and districts especially need to be part of this conversation because changes in policy, best practices and instruction will be needed if schools are to meet the challenges of a digital age.”

CML Launches New Web Site

The Center for Media Literacy recently announced the re-launch of its web site www.medialit.com

The site includes new implementation tools and thousands of pages of resource materials for use in PreK-12 classrooms.

CML Publishes Article in eSchool News

In September, eSchool News published “Hathaway Brown Discovers the Power of Media Literacy for 21st Century Students,” an article by CML President and CEO Tessa Jolls which tells the story of a full campus media literacy implementation facilitated by CML in early 2009.

[Read the article in](#)



At the center of the implementation is Hathaway Brown School, an all-girls' school founded near Cleveland, Ohio in 1876. Since its founding, Hathaway Brown has been distinguished by its fusion of academic and experiential approaches to learning. More recently it has been recognized for its dedication to 21st century innovations in learning design.

Before the implementation, Hathaway Brown faculty had already taught a number of media literacy courses and units, but in 2008 both faculty and school officials were coming to the realization that media literacy was quickly becoming an essential skill for their students. After perusing CML's "Five Key Questions That Can Change The World," HB Associate Head Sue Sadler recognized the potential of the analytic framework as a tool for systematically integrating media literacy skills into the curriculum of the entire school. In a four month period at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, all HB faculty received training in the use of the framework and designed and implemented their own media literacy units. The results were encouraging. Pre- and post-tests had been administered to all students in the school, and affirmative answers to the true/false question "Media messages affect me" increased significantly among

students in the elementary school, and even larger gains were made among 7th grade students. And HB faculty produced innovative curricula as well. Fifth grade curricula focused on the social construction of popularity, and in one seventh grade class, students used international editions of women's magazines to conduct an analysis of values implicit in media images of women from around the world.

Emboldened by the success of the initial implementation, HB officials have been busy planning an array of media literacy programs at the school. Plans for the current academic year include grade-level media literacy classes at fourth and seventh grades, and full integration of media literacy skills into the school's existing health curriculum.

To read the article, go to:

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/09/08/hathaway-brown-discovers-the-power-of-media-literacy-for-students-in-the-21st-century/>

CONSORTIUM
for **MEDIA LITERACY**

Uniting for Development

About us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products.

The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

www.consortiumformedia literacy.org

Media Literacy Resources

Teaching Tip: Read and access the resources presented here. The more you know about online privacy and safety, the better able you are to share the information with your students.

Resources – Online Privacy

Wall Street Journal, “What They Know”

Since July, the Wall Street Journal has been publishing an ongoing series on online privacy, covering topics from commercial tracking of children to recent Google and Microsoft business decisions affecting consumer privacy.

Available at: <http://online.wsj.com/public/page/what-they-know-digital-privacy.html>

New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>)

The Times has published numerous articles in the last year on privacy debates, pending legislation and industry self-regulation. Use the “Times Topics” tab on the Times home page to search for articles on privacy.

Private Browsing

All current web browsers allow users to activate private browsing sessions which block third-party cookies. One could say that this is a well-known secret. Browsers generally do not publicize this feature, but they’re usually available on the Tools tab in any browser you use. Only Safari blocks third-party cookies by default. You’re also likely to find a feature on the Tools tab which will allow you to delete all cookies or to select types of cookies for deletion.

Karen’s Cookie Viewer

If you’re really curious about the location and contents of your cookie files, Karen’s Cookie Viewer is a good utility to consider. The viewer is available at <http://www.karenware.com> Click “free programs” on the left menu bar to search for this program.

Yahoo Privacy Center <http://info.yahoo.com/privacy/us/yahoo/>

Google Privacy Center <http://www.google.com/intl/en/privacy.html>

The Yahoo and Google privacy centers are good consumer education tools for both children and adults. Both feature advertising interest managers, which display the consumer interests their cookies have identified, and allow you to edit those interests or opt out of interest-based advertising entirely. Yahoo allows users to opt out of tracking via web beacons, and Google provides a variety of other privacy tools, including encrypted search and privacy settings for Gmail, Blogger, Docs and other Google services.

Google has also created a Family Safety Center with online tips for educators, parents and children regarding online safety and privacy. Resources include videos and materials for classroom use, and links to partner organizations www.google.com/familysafety/

How to Avoid the Prying Eyes

This section of the Wall Street Journal “What They Know” micro-site provides a good sampling of browser plug-ins which you can use to control behavioral tracking. Privacy Choice offers one of the most user-friendly interfaces.

Network Advertising Initiative (<http://www.networkadvertising.org>)

The Network Advertising Initiative is the standard-bearer for the online advertising industry. It defines best practices, provides consumers a listing of member advertising networks and tools for selective or complete deletion of cookies from these networks. The site also includes links to numerous sources of information on online advertising, though these generally uphold the industry's point of view.

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (<http://www.iab.net>) is a trade site which promotes the online advertising industry through policy advocacy and a variety of public relations tools. The site includes a link to the recently formulated Self-Regulatory Principles for Online Behavioral Advertising.

Congressman Rick Boucher (<http://www.boucher.house.gov>)

Boucher (D-VA) is one of the co-sponsors of the online privacy bill introduced in the House earlier this year. To peruse the draft of the bill, click the tab for Legislation on the banner, select Internet and Technology Initiatives from the drop-down menu, then search for Privacy Legislation Discussion Draft.

Electronic Frontier Foundation (<http://www.eff.org>)

Though EFF can be adversarial, if not partisan in its stance towards the online advertising industry, its blog posts are succinct, support assertions with evidence, and offer a wealth of information on a variety of topics relevant to online privacy. For a scathing satire of data mining practices, look for the Stephen Colbert "Control Self Delete" video on the Deeplinks Blog, posted on August 26.

Electronic Privacy Information Center (<http://www.epic.org>)

EPIC offers good tools for in-depth research on privacy topics. Each topic page includes coverage of recent news and government actions, historical background, legal and policy discussion, and a selection of relevant news and references.

American Civil Liberties Union (<http://www.aclu.org>)

Also partisan in its approach, the ACLU site's Technology and Liberty section succeeds in calling attention to events and practices relevant to electronic privacy issues which mainstream media outlets have yet to report. For an Orwellian satire on electronic privacy, choose the Multimedia tab on the Technology and Liberty section of the site and search for "Ordering Pizza in 2015," posted on 10/22/09.

Individual Articles

"How Internet Cookies Work," by Marshall Brain, on How Stuff Works

<http://www.howstuffworks.com/cookie.htm>

"Are Charity Fundraisers Spying On You?" Anne Kadet, Smart Money Magazine, 5/18/2010

<http://www.smartmoney.com/personal-finance/estate-planning/are-charity-fundraisers-spying-on-you/>

For the majority of this issue, we have been discussing how advertisers handle data that is not personally identifiable. What kinds of research and analysis are undertaken when the subject is already known? This article reports on state of the art donor research, and the ethical questions raised by current practice in the field.

Med!aLit Moments

Through the Electronic Looking Glass

Many of us go through life wondering how much information is “out there” about us, but don’t make the effort to find out. In the meanwhile, an electronic mosaic of personal identity is quietly assembled from all corners of the web. The mosaic is made of information pieced together from public and commercial directories, newspaper articles, school announcements, and blog and social media posts, including our own.

In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have a chance to look beyond the virtual “looking glass” of the world wide web to understand how information is gathered about individuals, who gathers it, and for what purposes. In the process, students will learn that much is at stake in the way that their information is gathered and circulated, and they will learn how to negotiate their relationships with information publishers to meet their own interests and needs.

Have students conduct a Google search to gather personal information about themselves

AHA! I’m just looking at stuff when I surf the web, but once I see what people have posted about me online, I want to know what they’re doing and why they’re doing it!

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Grade Level: 9-12

Materials: Computer with high-speed internet access and classroom data projector; or access to school computing lab; whiteboard or interactive whiteboard, if available.

Activity: Begin the class by placing students in the role of gumshoe detective. If they “Google” somebody, where will most of the information they uncover likely come from? Here’s a sample: Facebook posts, Twitter posts, YouTube videos posted by friends and family, local newspapers, announcements of events, public recognitions and awards, blog posts and comments on blog posts. In fact, once they learn more about the person they’re investigating, they could even begin to incorporate these sources within their search terms: “NameX Springfield American Cancer Society.”

Demonstrate by conducting a search on yourself. Make sure to conduct a few initial searches on your own so you can screen results you would rather not display to students!

Depending on whether you have 1:1 (or at least 1:2) computer access, ask students to conduct a Google search on their own name in class, or as homework. Ask them to answer two basic questions as they complete their searches: 1) From what kinds of sources did they find information about themselves? 2) What kinds of reactions did they have to the

information? How did their reactions differ from what they might have felt if they had simply been searching for their favorite movies or games?

Begin the next class with a short discussion of their reactions to their searches. Use this discussion to pique their interest in the activity as a whole.

Next, ask students to describe the sources for their information. Were they family? Friends? Commercial sites? Ask for one or more examples of information/content posted by individuals, or from sites with URLs ending with “.org” or “.edu” Why do they think these people or organizations posted the information? Next, ask for one or more examples from commercial publishers. Why do they think they posted the information? (The objective is not to separate ‘good guys’ from ‘bad guys’ so much as to briefly contrast differing purposes.)

If you’re familiar with how social media sites work, and a social media example hasn’t already been given, ask for one. Discussing how social media service providers and their advertising partners use audience/user information is a great way to illustrate to students how important their data is to online commerce. You may also want to use the white board to outline the relationships involved. Here’s an example:

	GET	GIVE
Audiences (You)	Get the service that allows you to share messages, games, links and more with your friends.	Give to service providers and their advertising partners: Your attention to ads, Personal information from your profile, Usage data (places you visit, links you click, etc.). User-Generated Content (what you write and create).
Advertisers	Get a lot of information from you that makes it easier for them to figure out the kinds of things you like to buy.	Give you ads based on what they think you like. They send ads to your home page and other places. They cross their fingers and hope that you will buy their product.
Service Providers	Get paid \$\$\$ by Advertisers for the information you’re giving them.	Give you the pages/sites to use (Facebook, MySpace, etc.).

For a more detailed outline of this scenario, see the theme article for this issue (October 2010, Online Privacy)

In discussing user-generated content, you can use the example of an event (such as a party) that they post. The service provider and advertisers take relevant details from the event posting to start building a profile of their consumer interests. If you have an interactive white board available, students can add examples of the kinds of information, content, and/or links that the service provider and advertisers might be able to use.

Next, ask students to begin working in pairs. Ask them to focus on those search results that they were unhappy or dissatisfied with in some way. Working in pairs gives students a chance to share their reactions to these results without having to broadcast their content to the rest of the class. Students should also discuss what would they like to see happen with the information, and what steps they could take to make that happen. You may want to allow time for students to simply share their reactions before asking them to discuss their responses to the organizations and/or individuals who published the information.

Finally, bring the whole class back together to discuss possible plans of action. A whiteboard or interactive white board may be useful here. Student comments are likely trend towards two topics--privacy issues, or audience relationships with advertisers and service providers (or media producers) at commercial sites. Here are some possible questions you can ask students during this discussion:

Audience relationships with producers, service providers, advertisers --What should they expect from them? More services? Better services? Better prices? Where will they take their business if they don't get what they want?

Privacy— Should the producers, service providers and advertisers give users better options for privacy? Should individual users take responsibility for things they posted online? Should publishers feel responsible because they made the information/content available? Why? If they should be responsible, what should be done?

Extended Activities: Wish List -- Since interactive advertising is a pretty new field, what do you think advertisers, producers and service providers should be offering you in the next ten years? This activity allows students to use both creative and critical thinking skills. If you would like to discuss the relationships between students, commercial sites and online advertisers in somewhat simpler terms, you may want to review these two minute videos on the uses of cookie files posted by the Harvard Berkman Center on Internet on Society. The prize-winning video by Clayton Miller does an excellent job of explaining how advertising networks use third-party cookies to acquire information about individual consumers. The “Got Cookies?” video is very entertaining and should be accessible to freshman students. <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/cookiecontest/>

Also, if the parents of your students don't mind the task of deleting cookies once the project is completed, students can learn about the pervasiveness of third-party tracking cookies by clicking on online advertisements and noting the types of advertisements that begin to follow them from one web page to the next.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2010, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>