

Traditionally we think of privacy enhancing technologies has tools for hiding, obfuscating, and controlling disclosure. But in terms of an overall approach to privacy management we should also think about how technology can be used to creates visibility and awareness of informations security practices.

Is Simplicity the Key to Privacy?

While doing a literature search, I ran across an interesting news article. According to this article, Representative Ed Markey (D-MA) is introducing a bill called "Eliminate Warehousing of Consumer Internet Data Act of 2006". One of the more compelling notions behind this bill is that of deleting data after use. I wonder -- could this be a key component to protecting privacy?

Think about it. Even if a company used your information, if they had to delete it afterwards, wouldn't your privacy most likely be preserved? Furthermore, if they used it to transfer to someone else, and that person is bound by the same law, the same logic would follow. The recipient of the transfer could use your information for its intended purpose and then they must delete it. Granted, there would need to be stringent guidelines for what constitutes "intended use".

If we were to accept this approach, we would no longer have the staggering number of ubiquitous data warehouses full of our private information, and companies such as ChoicePoint and Axiom would not be selling our information to other vendors.

This sounds like a nice idea, but would such a bill ever be passed? Would politicians be able to withstand the lobbying power of organizations seeking to bar such legislation from being passed?

This certainly isn't a solution to our privacy woes, but it is a simple idea that may be a step in the right direction. Read more in Markey's press realease.

One of the primary reasons cited for the disproportionate number of data breaches at universities is the decentralized environment -- data being spread out in various locations on campus which makes it difficult to control the access to the data.