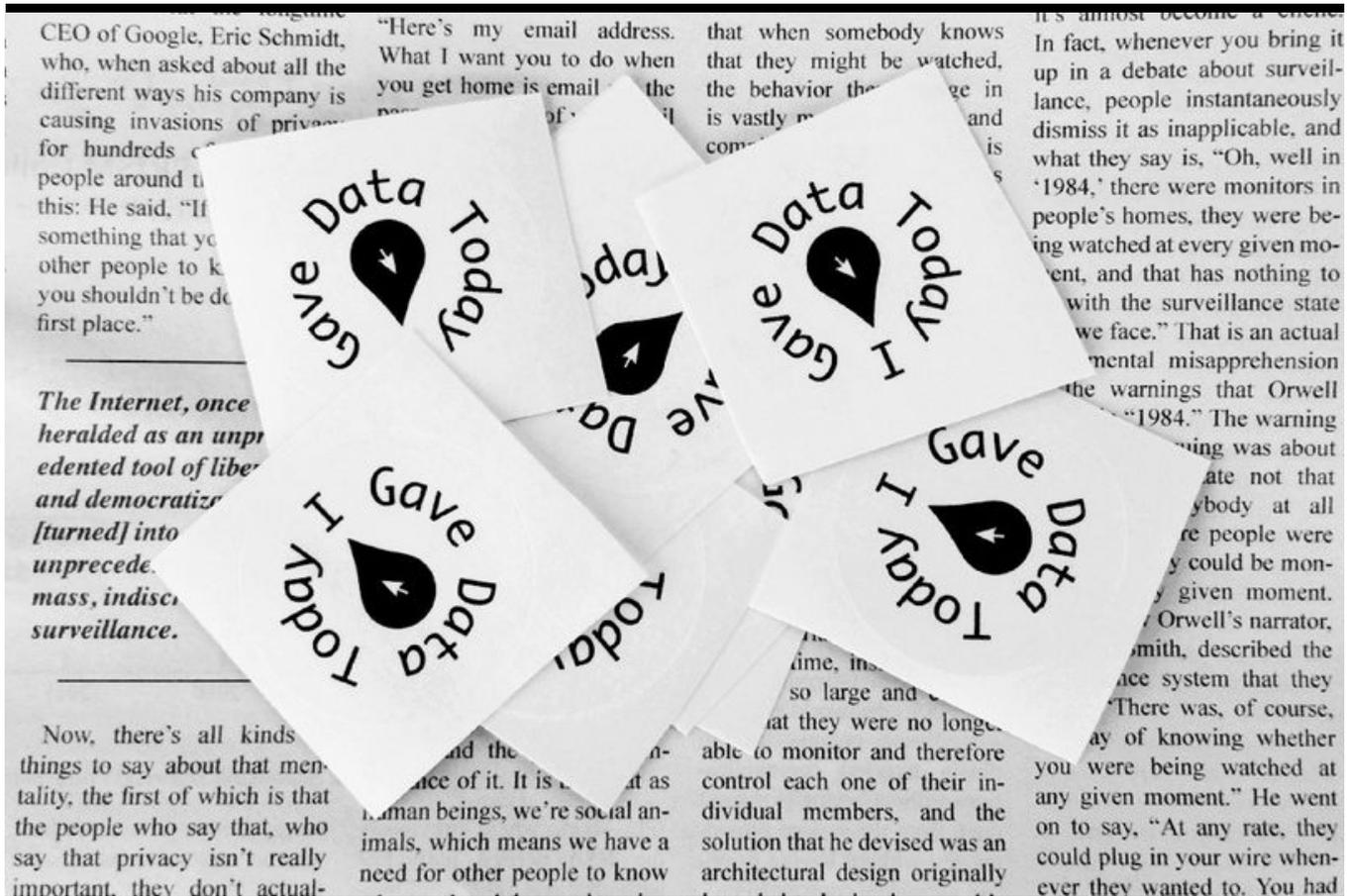


# BIG DATA AND BEYOND: DOES PRIVACY STILL MATTER?

By Naomi Leach

02 : 06 : 2015 Big Data : Privacy : The Data Cafe



DataCafe by Henry Lam, Sophia Callahan, Chris Fussner and Noah Emrich, New York

As our relationship with our mobile devices grows ever more intimate and trackable, the [DataCafe.biz](#) project at NYCxDDesign 2015 provokes visitors to question their relationship with their personal data.

Comparing data donation to blood donation, donors are similarly rewarded with cookies for giving their data. The **installation** raises some important questions, such as ‘where is the human’s place in a data-driven world? Where does our data go? Who owns our data? What do they do with it? Does this relationship reciprocate?’ DataCafe.biz co-creator, Sophia Callahan, explains. It’s not just consumers that should be concerned with the answers these questions pose. While brands can undeniably glean valuable consumer insights from big data, this arena is still fraught with tension over privacy issues.

In another example of this growing concern, the **Nice 2 Hack You** app, created by Rajeev Basu and band Big Data, plays on the monetary value of personal data. It hacks into a user’s browser history and offers big data prizes, rewarding anyone willing to share the embarrassing sites that the algorithm has found in their history.

'In the post-Snowden era, it should come as no surprise to anyone that our data is being exploited regularly. It is important for internet users to be mindful of those exploitative purposes and to take steps to be more protective,' Big Data told It's Nice That.

In these early days, as we begin to trace the outline of our digital footprint, we as consumers have voluntarily and unknowingly handed our personal data over to external powers. Online, the nuances of one-to-one communication, context and audience are lost, as Kenneth Cukier, data editor at The Economist, explains to LS:N Global. 'We speak in public sometimes with a megaphone, at other times in a whisper.'

But it's not only cyber-terrorists and governments that can use the findings of big data, industry experts highlight its benefits for all types of human behaviour analysis, from medical epidemic research to brand strategy.

Discussing the recent decision to license data from tweets to companies and researchers, Cukier tells LS:N Global: 'The information can be very valuable, but this value is only realised when it's put into the marketplace for entities to do creative things with it. Yes, privacy concerns shouldn't be scrapped entirely. Yes, good taste is called for. But as a principle, the idea of making the data available will improve lots of things, from important things, like how patients recover from illness, to superficial things, like how to get customers to buy more shampoo.'

Cukier continues by citing the example of suicide prevention and how mining big data and personal information could ensure that people are reached in their moments of need. For advertisers, access to big data will be a game-changer. Brands will be able to hone and personalise advertising content by the moment, creating a resonance with consumers that is more engaging and relevant than ever before.

With the blurring of privacy boundaries and the irresistible ubiquity of self-quantifying behaviour, the internet is awash with personal data. The question remains, 'who, if anyone has the right to our data?'

Big data offers a fertile opportunity for brands to personalise content and target consumers in real time. A transparent approach which empowers the user may be a more effective way of persuading the sceptical consumer to voluntarily relinquish their personal data.