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Literature, Russian Literature



Justin Kacherian At a point in time where personal information is dealt with utmost prudence, any action that undermines its privacy is generally looked down upon. However, according to Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, privacy loss is the “ social norm” and is being accepted more readily as the online community has no strict privacy expectations anymore. Essentially, Zuckerberg is correct in the sense that as Facebook evolves and delivers more accessible features that connects the online social world, it should come at the expense of something, which usually comes in the form of our personal privacy. In February of 2011, Facebook announced a new controversial program that would give third party developers and websites user’s personal information that ranged from phone numbers to home addresses. Consequently, our personal data was being exported to third party sites, which then used Facebook to advertise back to us in the hope of potential profits. Ultimately, this program was solely cultivated for economic gains on part of Facebook; however, it had to be withdrawn within a few days after the company was harshly reprimanded for surrendering users personal information for profitable revenue. The high volume of criticism was the reason why Zuckerberg came out and downplayed the privacy loss associated with this program and calling it the new “ social norm. ” Although a quote like this may seem very bold as it only justifies the wrong doing of Facebook, privacy loss should now be more accepted due to the new mediums Facebook allows the online community to achieve. From the ease of connecting with other people, through video and picture sharing, to just the basic aspect of presenting yourself through a technological way, Facebook has created a new spectrum of online communication that many

see as a boon to society. Yet, as we rush to cling to the rapid developing online social world, we may be voluntarily giving up our privacy, but doing so with acknowledgement. In other words, we understand that the development of Facebook as a technological power can't continue to excel without some privacy loss on our part. The social services that we expect aren't free, and we generally have to pay for it with our privacy and personal information, which is very profitable to a company like Facebook. This may mean that our names and personal information may have to be given to third party developers for the advertising portion of Facebook to stay the same. It could also simply mean that we need to give up personal privacy for the basic economic aspect that Facebook needs to profit in order to continue and deliver its services. Every time we login, we expect a certain standard from Facebook in the sense that there are no anomalies that we aren't used to. In other words, users don't expect drastic changes that would change the overall appearance of the Facebook page that would hinder our pleasure on the site. This could simply mean that the layout of the page is the same every time we login or even the consistency of keeping the Facebook banner blue instead of changing it to a different color. However, this regularity that we expect on Facebook's part is coming at a price and it is becoming more evident that the cost of this is coming from our personal privacy. More importantly is that Facebook encourages everything that undermines our privacy and I would not be surprised if they continue to do so openly as ultimately they created all the features that are invasive. From the like button that allows all of our friends to see our favor of interests, to the fact that any photo we become tagged in can not only be seen by our friends, but

also of their friends. A chain of personal information just transfers from one person to the next, creating this ubiquitous online atmosphere. In addition, Facebook encourages all these features in a nonchalant way, where the like button is under every post you look at, or the fact that every time you upload a photo you are automatically given the option to tag people. The February 2011 program that transmitted all of users personal data to advertisers, seems only like a beginning to what Facebook may plan for the future. As more and more people's lives get exported to the online social world, I think there will become a rising complacency with privacy loss as it would be seen as an inevitable price to pay for the ease of connecting with people at the sole of your fingers. Essentially, this complacency is evident from a recent survey a global branding firm, Siegel plus Gale conducted. This firm surveyed 403 users about Facebook's new policy and found that less than 40% of Facebook users understood the new privacy policies, 75% plan to change their privacy settings, but the firm found that none of them were willing to leave Facebook behind (Choney). Ultimately, this survey exemplifies that users may be willing to make some adjustments to the privacy of their online media pages, but none of them are willing to compromise the usability of the site and completely leave Facebook behind. Yet, some people may still think that people aren't consciously giving up their personal privacy. James Bowman in his article, "Is Stupid Making Us Google" believes that the current youngest generation is one of the "stupidest" generations to come forth because we were never disciplined right (Bowman). Someone like Bowman may believe that we aren't willingly giving up our personal privacy but are unconsciously doing so because we

are naturally less intelligent. Others are voluntarily giving up their personal privacy for the benefits of social networking, but do so with uncertainty of what to expect. Joss Wright explains that we “ do not yet fully understand the power of the data we have shared and it may shape society in ways we can’t predict” (Wright). His argument stresses that the benefits and satisfaction of using Facebook are genuine and tangible, but the privacy risk seems to be an issue related to the distant future. Nevertheless, I would argue against both assumptions that are related to Wright and Bowman’s thinking because if I’m willing to upload personal information for everyone to see, I am going to do so in a sensible manner after knowing the blatant risk of some privacy loss which may come in the form of a never-ending group of people now knowing something new about me that I posted. Lastly, sites like Facebook have become an integral part of the daily lives of many people and I doubt anyone would deviate from using this online social medium regardless of how harsh the privacy concerns are. Human nature compels us to be curious about the lives of other people and Facebook seems to connect this curiosity very well. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the benefits of using online social media sites, such as Facebook, have to come at a price of the invasion of our privacy. It’s not that we unknowingly give up our privacy for Facebook to profit off, but it seems as though the rising technological advances has turned privacy into a seemingly inconsequential issue and one of the past. The ultimate purpose of social networking is to present yourself openly in a sensible way. The argument of “ privacy loss” seems to imply that anonymity is a beneficial thing, which seems to defeat the original purpose of the growing online social world. Works Cited Bowman,

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