

Privacy and Databases – ITGS Quandary?

When do you think the extract from an article was written below?

Write your guess down.....

Then try to find this article on the web and find the real date of the article.....

Has this article's worries been realised? Find one article to share with the class from the last 6 months, which has direct evidence for this.

Post a blog post citing your found article explaining the social and ethical issues that are related with using such databases, the technologies that underpin them and your solution to the issue.

Next week you will be beginning to design your own database!

“But such a Data Center poses a grave threat to individual freedom and privacy. With its insatiable appetite for information, its inability to forget anything that has been put into it, a central computer might become the heart of a government surveillance system that would lay bare our finances, our associations, or our mental and physical health to government inquisitors or even to casual observers. Computer technology is moving so rapidly that a sharp line between statistical and intelligence systems is bound to be obliterated. Even the most innocuous of centers could provide the “foot in the door” for the development of an individualized computer-based federal snooping system...



Any increase in the amount of recorded information is certain to increase the risk of errors in reporting and recording and indexing. Information distortion also will be caused by machine malfunctioning. Moreover, people working with the data in Washington or at a distance through remote terminals can misuse the information. As information accumulates, the contents of an individual's computerized dossier will appear more and more impressive and will impart a heightened sense of reliability to the user, which, coupled with the myth of computer infallibility, will make it less likely that the user will try to verify the recorded data. This will be true despite the “softness” or “imprecision” of much of the data. Our success or failure in life ultimately may turn on what other people decide to put into our files and on the programmer's ability, or inability, to evaluate, process, and interrelate information. The

great bulk of the information likely to find its way into the center will be gathered and processed by relatively unskilled and unimaginative people who lack discrimination and sensitivity. Furthermore, a computerized file has a certain indelible quality — adversities cannot be overcome simply by the passage of time.” (Someone, Sometime in the Past)